MEZZOGIORNO

JOHN AYSCOUGH

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MEZZOGIORNO

Bickerstaffe-Drew, Francis.

BY

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MEZZOGIORNO

BOOK I

CHAPTER I

Mezzogiorno — both ways, for it was farthest south and hottest noon. The road, twisting up from the narrow belt of almost flat land between the mountains and the sea, was blinding white; the shadows, where there were any, looked black but not cool. Nothing looked cool: certainly not the many-tinted sea, patches of which were deep purple, streaks of dark amethyst lacing the broader masses of sapphire and clear hazel-green. The ribbon of bright ochre strand made a hard contrast; then the brake of prickly pear — with here and there an ancient shabby olive — clinging to the steep, almost precipitous, hillside; and so the mountains, one behind another; and behind, over all, everywhere, the staring blue of the sky. The face of the hillside was often white, and when one caught glimpses of little towns, capping spurs of the mountains, these were white also.

As the road curved up into the hills the view was always changing, but it was always lovely. Gillian did not dispute the prodigal beauties of the scene; she noted every phase of it, and did it all justice; but its splendours almost tired her. She knew they would make pictures, and that she should see pictures made of them: and she was sick of seeing pictures made. Ever since she could remember she had heard landscape discussed

from the pictorial point of view. She had very seldom been allowed to look at any scene of beauty, in her father's company at all events, without being told whether it would or would not make a picture. He had an excellent instinct in the business, and knew instantly what was translateable to canvas, and what was impracticable. Nor was he given to waste time on attending to what could not be thus caught and carried to market. His original accuracy of instinct had grown into a trained habit: so that, if he had ever had any sympathy for the loveliness that he dealt in, it had long been lost, leaving merely taste in its stead.

He was not, certainly, a great artist, but he was an unusually capable and clever landscape-painter. It was unfortunate that he had come to regard everything as landscape or not landscape, and everything which was landscape merely as the raw material for a picture.

The Lady of Shalott declared that she was half sick of shadows; Gillian, though she made no declaration on the subject, was quite sick of pictures.

She did not like them much better, because she and her father chiefly lived on them. Perhaps she liked them all the less on that account. It is difficult to imagine that a butcher can be very fond of animals.

Gillian and her father had always been together, all her life, and were good comrades. She did not idealise him, and did not even know that she ought to have done so. Nor did he idealise her. She was exactly what he wanted: obedient when a small child, and never troublesome either then or now; free from vapours or temper, not over-talkative, economical, so unselfish that he had never found out she was unselfish at all, and decidedly satisfactory to look at. Gillian was not argumentative, and he hated arguing, though not averse to rather pontifical pronouncements of his own opinion: he would have resented her being a fool, but Mr. Thesiger was not

a fool himself, and never took her for one. On the contrary, he fancied his daughter was clever, and was grateful that she did not insist on proving it. He perceived that she read whenever she had the chance — their nomad life did not always afford books or opportunity — and he was observant enough to see that she read as only they do to whom books are really addressed. Gillian never maddened her father (as it would have maddened him) by giving him her books at second-hand. They were friends of whose intimacy she did not brag or chatter. But out of them and observation she had silently educated herself.

That was about all the education she had ever had, that and travelling continually from place to place, and from one country to another. As they had not rushed hither and thither, but, as it were, strolled deliberately from France to Spain, from Spain back again to France, thence by Southern Germany and the Tyrol into Italy, where now they had been a long time, she had at least learned many languages, and had learned many things besides.

Her father was the younger son of an English peer's younger brother, and had been to an English public school, and afterwards to an English university, so that he had been well enough educated. But his university career had not crowned him with either credit or renown, and had not led to honours or even to a degree. He had probably been livelier in those days, but no wiser than at present, and had been guilty of the offence of painting a don's house of a colour its owner disapproved, whereupon he had been sent down in disgrace, and had continued painting ever since.

His father had intended him for diplomacy, in which career it was considered that his uncle, Lord Coldhurst, who was British Minister at the Court of

Naples, would be of service to him. But his Excellency did not approve of the rustication, and failed to perceive the humour of the escapade that had led to it, and stiffly declined to accept the discredited undergraduate as an extra attaché. So Roddy Thesiger, though he went abroad, and stayed there, did not go as an embryo representative of his country.

Poor Roddy, in fact, rather turned against England, and grew into a habit of abusing his native land that made him tedious to his wandering fellow-countrymen, and somewhat incomprehensible to the foreigners whom he favoured with his views. These latter by no means disagreed with all his criticisms, but thought it odd of him to promulgate them. They were not disinclined to admit that England might be a bumptious, self-satisfied country, apt to snub genius till it had pushed itself into a position to snub it itself, full of smug pruderies and nervously afraid of originality, apt to thrust into ostracism or exile its Byrons, and Shelleys and Keats', and Landors (of some of which they did not remember to have heard); a land of insupportable Sabbaths and hypocritical, altruistic foreign policy; a land whose diplomatists abroad were, as they now gathered, particularly inept — but why should this Englishman insist on all this? Was it not already quite well known? And, anyway, had not Englishmen better leave foreigners to find out for themselves the faults and weaknesses of Albion?

However, to return to our theme. Mr. Thesiger had a fair fund of knowledge and had added to it in Rome, and Venice, and Florence, and elsewhere, long before Gillian was born. So that from him also she had been able to learn, and indeed, had contrived to learn more from him than he himself had ever known. Some people get more out of a book than the author

ever put in it, and Gillian had had the talent to do the same with her father.

When he had first found himself in Rome, now many years ago, his youth and name and a sufficiency of good looks and manners had recommended him, and he became fairly intimate with those there who were much cleverer and better informed than himself. From them he had picked up unconsidered trifles of knowledge and a sort of habitual familiarity with the traditions and associations of the metropolis of history. He had always a certain degree of taste and instinct for the picturesque, and out of so much picturesqueness he picked a kind of mosaic of historical and artistic culture.

CHAPTER II

So it came about that Gillian, who had never been to school and had never had a governess, at twenty years of age was not so ignorant as she might have been had those great advantages been hers. She could talk four or five languages beside her father's, and had her mind stored with many things and many memories of peoples and places that not one English girl of her age out of a hundred would have had any personal knowledge of.

Unfortunately she had no country. England she had never seen, and though she had been born in Spain, she certainly did not account herself a Spaniard; nor, though her mother had been a Russian, had she ever been to Russia. Mrs. Thesiger had died when her only child was but six or seven years old, and the girl's recollection of her was pale and faded. She also had been an artist, and might have become a far greater one than her husband had she lived.

"That headland," said Mr. Thesiger, pointing across his daughter to Capo di Sant Andrea, "would make a picture. But so would that village that looks as if it wanted to jump out of the mountains into the sea."

Gillian looked at the village, and then down the steep hillside to the rocky point, but her eyes strayed beyond it, across the narrowing sea to the Calabrian shore.

No doubt those amethyst and opal piles of untrodden-looking mountains, seamed with dark gorges, that even at this distance looked hot, would make pictures

too; as probably they had yielded many already, to many painters; but she thought her father would be less likely to attack them. Those large effects of distance and colour had not hitherto been in his line, and for that reason she could look at them with unprofessional enjoyment. She would never eat them, or dress herself in the proceeds of their mockery on canvas.

She suddenly felt a strong desire to be among them, and alone. She was not a sulky, misanthropic person, apt to segregate herself, but she all at once realised that she was tired of perpetually meeting new people, making brief acquaintance, and never, among them all, discovering a friend. To be quite by herself over there, among those unprofaned mountains, would not be lonely. But it was lonely to be as she was — as it seemed she would always be.

Sometimes they had remained several weeks in one place, and, if they stayed in an hotel, they had seemed to become quite intimate with the other people staying there. Then they had moved on, or the other travellers went away before them, and the promise of friendship — when there had been any such promise — broke itself. And they did not always stay in hotels, for lodgings were cheaper, and they were easy travellers, accepting comfort when it was there but not scandalised by its absence. Mr. Thesiger was not greedy, as many better people are, and, if he knew a good dinner when he got one, he was not discontented or cross when the fare was rough. He could shift for himself as if he had never known what attendance was, just as he could accept attendance when it was at his disposal as if he had never in his life dispensed with it.

Besides, he was not thrifty, and, when he had sold a picture to advantage, he would lodge his daughter

and himself in expensive quarters; so that, at their next move, it would be convenient to economise.

"You are looking over there," he observed cheerfully, "as if you would like to be there."

"So I should."

"I am afraid you are getting bored. That is not civil."

Mr. Thesiger was not in general an irritable person, and he never snapped at his daughter. When he accused her of being bored and uncivil he spoke as though it were a compliment.

"I must say you are never boring," she replied, forgetting, perhaps, the occasions when he abused his native country.

"One endeavours to abstain from that vice . . . but really, Gill, you were looking wistful."

"I was probably looking hungry. It seems a long time since that coffee at Aci-Reale."

"So it is; hours ago. It was rather heartless of you to remind me. But I doubt if you would get much to eat over there among those mountains."

They were quite intimate, and it had probably never occurred to Mr. Thesiger that sympathy and intimacy are different.

Gillian could not tell him that it was their life which was growing stale: she would not for anything have upset him. She took it for granted that their way of living was inevitable; and what was the good of letting him suspect that it had suddenly struck her as wearying?

She turned her eyes away from Calabria, and the road gave another twist and put that view behind her. Also, she strangled a yawn dexterously enough to escape detection.

But when two people are sitting side by side, in de-

fenceless laziness, the thought that has hit one of them sometimes gives a lunge at the other.

"That old Lady Wilbury we met at Aci-Reale," said Mr. Thesiger, "rather disapproved of me."

"Did it bother you?"

"Not in the least. She gave me to understand that it was hard on you, dragging you about Europe, while I painted landscapes."

"I always dislike people with arched eyebrows," remarked Gillian, "especially when they lick them."

"Gillian! nobody but an ant-eater could lick its eyebrows."

"*She* did: with the tip of her little finger, which she would just touch with her lips beforehand."

Mr. Thesiger laughed.

"I told her you had no home but Europe," he remarked complacently. "She has three or four. If I had one of them I wouldn't drag you about."

"Perhaps she meant that you might have all four of hers, and then the dragging about would cease automatically."

"I never thought of that," declared her father, not ill-pleased. He had always been handsome, and believed that he was still almost in his first youth.

"Lady Wilbury is a fine woman in spite of her eyebrows," said Gillian. "And not a day too old for you. She told me that her elbows were extraordinarily admired by the Roman sculptors. If you noticed, she almost shook hands with them."

Her father laughed. He was glad to have a daughter who could amuse him in such blazing heat.

"Should you like being a step-daughter?"

"I never would be one; if you married Lady Wilbury I should marry her son."

"But you never saw him."

"Not yet. But in my position I should have ample opportunities."

"No, you wouldn't; he's in a lunatic asylum."

"Then he would be glad to come out, and would be the less likely to object to me."

Mr. Thesiger lay back in the rickety carriage, and enjoyed himself. He was always pleased when his daughter talked nonsense. She was evidently quite cheerful, and it did not occur to him to notice how dexterously she had sheered away from the subject of Lady Wilbury's reproofs. She herself was annoyed to hear of that prosperous lady's interference; the first duty of mankind, she considered, was to mind its own business. If people with four big houses of their own in England must needs come prowling down to Sicily, what affair was it of theirs if other folk did it out of necessity?

"On the whole, I wouldn't marry her, papa," she remarked. "She would bore you in spite of her elbows."

"My dear girl, I never dreamt of it," Mr. Thesiger protested seriously.

"No, it was she. But be on your guard. Once those ideas come into one person's head, you never can tell where they'll crop up next. It is like republicanism. When one nation makes up its mind to stick to its king after all, another resolves to do away with *its*. Can one say 'its' like that? You know I never was in England, and my English has to be on its guard too."

"So will I be, since you insist. Do you apprehend any danger here at Taormina?"

"*Chi lo sa?* Forewarned is forearmed. If I see any one rushing at you amain, I shall stroke my eyebrows and begin talking about elbows."

It did not occur to either of them that anything

might be apprehended at Taormina for Gillian herself.

She had never had any lovers, that she knew of; and had made scores, hundreds, of passing acquaintances, among young men of every sort, without doubting that they would pass, as they always had.

She had a frankness that was disarming to flirtation; and, having always had a man for her companion, was not apt to exaggerate the importance of men. A good many of them had bored her, and she had an idea that they esteemed it a masculine prerogative: if one man bored another, she perceived, the victim made his escape without scruple, and this she had contrived to do also. Prerogatives are all very well, but only courtiers need submit to them.

It is quite likely that she did not even realise how beautiful she was, for her beauty was not of the sort that she saw admitted about her. Her figure was all right, she knew, but hair like new copper was not orthodox, and she had such a lot of it that sometimes she was tempted to envy those who had a lady's-maid. And her eyes were nearly of the same peculiar colour, dark-bronze red, deepening almost to chocolate in shadow.

CHAPTER III

They found the Hotel Naumachia not too full to admit them and not too luxurious-looking for the condition of their purse.

"We might have gone to the Timéo if I had sold that picture," said Mr. Thesiger, coming into his daughter's room to borrow some water out of her jug. "But the view from my balcony would make a dozen pictures."

"What picture?" demanded Gillian, ignoring the balcony.

"Why, you are arching your own eyebrows — take care!" laughed her father. "The portrait I painted of you." He was not much given to portraits, but this one had really been a success. If a young man of twenty had painted it, great things would have been predicted of him. When elderly people produce something good, the critics only wonder why it is not better.

"And some one wanted to buy it?"

Mr. Thesiger blushed: his daughter's frankness was habitual, but so was her tact generally. He knew that he was not much in the habit of quenching a purchaser. After all, they lived on his pictures, and it would not have been very convenient to carry them all about with them.

"Yes. That Jewish-looking banker from Naples. But I wouldn't: though, you know, I only called it 'A Mandolin-Player.' He offered me a good lot, too."

Gillian was touched. They were always glad of money, and needed it. But, after all, her father would not sell her portrait.

"It *was* decent of you," she said, turning away from her unpacking. Her English was all picked up from him and from the travelling Anglo-Saxons they had met. It often scandalised the maturer matrons of that faultless nation, who were not at the trouble to account for it. "God bless you!" she had exclaimed to one of them, an old lady who had expressed her belief that no one south of the Alps had any religion.

"My dear!" cried the old lady.

"I only meant, 'Where were you riz?'" explained Gillian.

"*Miss* Thesiger!" had moaned the old lady.

Her father, in his shirt-sleeves, went off with the water-jug, and Gillian continued her brief unpacking.

"He *is* a good sort," she said to herself.

No one could appreciate better the heroism of his refusal to translate his daughter's portrait into specie. Money is not only useful but portable.

"It will bother him every time he packs," she remembered. "At this moment my face is probably sticking to his socks. It was only painted three weeks ago."

And some one — a Jew, too — had wanted to buy it!

When they went down to dinner they found a very dark room lighted with a violent but ineffectual display of cheap kerosene lamps. Outside, however, was the view. They had lunched there already, without the lamps, long after everybody else had finished. As soon as it had grown cool enough they had sallied forth, and stayed out till the brief dusk had suddenly admitted that it was night.

Outside was the view, silvered by an almost theatrical moon.

"I am never much good at those moon effects," Mr. Thesiger complained, eyeing the extravagant loveliness

beyond the balcony. "It is an impressionist smack that I have never hit."

"Wait till to-morrow," said Gillian. "The moon will go, but the other things wait. I wish that syndic would not lap his soup like a dog; one can't hear oneself speak."

"*He* will hear *you*. How do you know he is a syndic? It isn't bad soup."

"I know it by his waist and by his smile. That sort of smile is invariably municipal. What does it matter if he hears? he can't understand English."

Mr. Thesiger felt sure that the owner of the waist and of the smile *was* a syndic: his daughter was always correct in her instincts. But he proposed an objection.

"Why should he dine here if he is a syndic? He must have a home of his own."

"But his wife died last year. Can't you see it? That is a widower's smile."

"Do I smile like that?"

"Don't be silly. You are English: and you are not a proper widower: you have me. That syndic's wife died of her first baby, and it was buried with her."

"Gillian!" And Mr. Thesiger tried not to look at the bereaved husband and father.

But the syndic was not the only person at table beside themselves. There were two officers of Carabinieri, both good-looking, and elaborately unconscious of Gillian. They talked to one another and behaved beautifully, anxiously alluding to Northern Italy as if determined not to be accused of being local. There was also an old lady, who might certainly have understood Gillian, had she heard her, for she was unmistakably English. Miss Thesiger's confidences, however, were never high-pitched, and the old lady was a little deaf. One could see also that she was rather

poor; her clothes were old and even shabby, and could never have been anything but cheap. Neither could she have ever been otherwise than plain, but her withered face and faded eyes had a nice expression. She sat next to Mr. Thesiger, and he presently opened up an acquaintance, for he was always civil, and had a sanguine interest in strangers that was not in the least professional. No one could have looked less likely to buy a picture than this meagre little lady.

Of course he discovered that she was deaf, but he did not wince when she levelled at him an ear-trumpet like the hooter of a motor nowadays. There were no motors then. Gillian looked about her, and became aware of a young man, with whom, however, she did not on that occasion open an acquaintance.

He was not talking to anybody, and, when she saw him first, his eyes were bent upon his plate.

"*I* will show you how to make a salad," said the syndic to the two officers of Carabinieri. "It is a tradition in my family, that salad."

Then the young man looked up, and Gillian abruptly admitted to herself that she had never seen any one so beautiful. She certainly had never met him before, but his face was familiar.

"Antinöus," she said to herself. "The Antinöus of Naples."

But the expression was different: the mouth was the same, but the lips of Antinöus express a melancholy the more bitter that it is incomparably sweet; and a hopeless agony, as if all the beauty of the world was incomprehensible owing to the loss of all key to its meaning. There is nothing, anywhere else, like the sadness of that youth's promised but unborn smile, just about to break upon the exquisite curved lips, but for ever unbreaking.

The young man at whom Gillian was looking had the

same lips, but they expressed no troubled sweetness. Both statue and man showed on their faces the same serenity, but the serenity of Antinöus is that of one who has despaired of the answer to life's riddle, and will let it be, though wearied by it. The living young man's serenity was vexed by no conjecture at all, no staring at the lovely face of life to try and gather what she intends by it.

Antinöus could never have been cross, though he must have been often unhappy, or the sculptor could not have rendered in marble the suggestion of so desperate a content. Gillian's young man was not ill-tempered either, but one would say he had never been unhappy and never would be. Cruel he certainly did not look, any more than Antinöus: heartless he might be, which Antinöus could never have been.

He listened for a moment to the syndic, and went on with his dinner, smiling almost imperceptibly. He looked like some one easily amused a little, never amused very much. He did not seem, either, like one who would be deeply interested, even in himself — still less by things and people outside himself. Antinöus, with all his faultless beauty, suggests nothing exalted in the way of intellect: neither did the almost equal beauty of the young man opposite.

He was, obviously, not stupid or silly. But his mind was idle, like his character. One would not say he cared much for anything, unless it were pleasure.

"Gillian," said her father, "I want to introduce you to Miss Pridd."

He spoke as though Miss Pridd had been a lifelong friend, but his daughter knew well that he now beheld her for the first time. He was always like that, with people as with places. "That is the best street here," he would say, as they entered a town which he was visiting for the first time. "Quite good shops: Rulli's

is a decent place to dine at," as if he had dined there for years together.

Gillian smiled her best, and Miss Pridd returned her smiles with vigour.

"I am afraid," she said, "I am rather deaf; but Mr. Thesiger's voice is so clear, he does not have to speak at all loud."

If she had been a pyramid Mr. Thesiger would have made her hear without bellowing. He was made up of such gifts, and he knew all about everybody in ten minutes without ever asking questions.

"Miss Pridd comes here every year," he informed Gillian. "Her sister, Mrs. Mold, is buried here."

"Earth to earth," observed Gillian; but only for her father's ear.

"We used to come here together," said the old lady, adjusting a locket, "when we were both alive. People hadn't begun to come here then."

"Does she mean that she is dead now, or that she and her sister were not people?" surmised Gillian, still in her father's ear, but infusing pathos into her smile, which went on like a minute gun.

"And now I keep on coming," explained Miss Pridd lucidly. "She died in August, so I come back at this time. It is not the season."

CHAPTER IV

Miss Pridd made sketches, and sallied forth in pursuit of them at almost all hours which were not meal-times. She had contrived to visit Sicily annually for a long time without learning any Italian, but her friendly old smile took her everywhere. No *facchini* harried her, no officers of the dogana bullied her. Her empty purse was as obvious as her deaf unprotectedness, but Italians and Sicilians are kinder-hearted than the blustering and prosperous might imagine.

Ragged youths would dog her steps, without hope of *soldi*, to point out views, and indicate flat stones on which the meagre old maid might sit. Sometimes she would draw their portraits, which they would recognise about as well as a dog recognises himself in a looking-glass. But they were more flattered.

Gillian, who left all the sketching to her father, wandered down to the little bay by Capo Sant Andrea, and there she found Miss Pridd, desolated by the absence of brown-pink, which she had left on her dressing-table.

"One wants it for those mountains over there — at least the valleys in between. But I am always forgetting things. If any one could leave their name behind them I should leave mine."

"One can get on quite well without a name, travelling," said Gillian. "One is always Signorina, and there's an end of it."

"But one likes to know who one is."

"I don't care to a bit. One would do just as well if one were anybody else."

Miss Pridd disliked this doctrine. The Pridds had always been decent people, mostly clergymen, rather nearly related to deans, though seldom in the enjoyment of rich benefices themselves. Poor Miss Pridd! she imagined that the consideration she met with was a tribute to her gentility, whereas it was all due to her own meek gentleness.

"You have a book," she remarked politely. "I can't read out of doors: it makes my eyes ache," blinking them at a dazzling white sheet of Watman's drawing-paper. "But don't let me be in your way. Read away."

Gillian perceived that the old lady liked to sketch alone, and rambled off. A little stony path led over the hill down into another bay.

There she found a shady spot, and sat down: but the open book lay unheeded on her lap. Over against her, beyond the blue neck of sea, were those opal mountains, much further away than yesterday, now that she looked at them from the level of the shore.

To her left the coast curved in and out, with harder mountains behind it.

"Down there," she reminded herself, "are Scylla and Charybdis. Hard rock or whirlpool, which would be most unpleasant?"

So the wily-tongued traveller had sailed down here — between where she was and yonder innumerable peaks and gorges. Among the languages she knew, Greek — even modern Greek—was not one; and all she knew of Ulysses was from Tennyson and from her father, who had a traditional sense of understanding Greek still.

The mountains beyond the strait interested her more than Odysseus. She had always been a wanderer herself, and had no patience with him for not going home. If the island-princes were "over-bold," why hadn't he gone back to keep them in order? She did

not, however, pity Penelope; Penelope had the best of it. Why had everybody but herself a home? Even Miss Pridd had some sort of home somewhere. Gillian felt herself a tramp, and the charms of a tramp's life had begun to fail her. She never had the least idea where she would be at the end of a month, and sometimes it was tedious to remember where she had been a month ago.

"My only home is a box which won't lock," she told herself. "It is almost indecent. When we landed at Catania it emptied itself on the steps of the dogana, and all my inmost garments stood confessed."

A young man came walking down the slope, armed with a big towel, rolled up under his arm. Unless she coughed he would doubtless proceed to bathe. She coughed drastically.

"Scusi, signorina," said the young man — Antinöus, of course —" do I disarrange you?"

Whatever he was, he was not English; but then she had never thought he was.

He came up to her, hat in hand, his curly red-bronze locks uncovered.

"They are just my own colour," she observed to herself. Last night in the dusky dining-room they had looked almost black.

"I was only reading — had not even begun," she said. "I can easily go back to Miss Pridd if you want to bathe."

"Your mother? But pray do not let me lead you away. One can bathe anywhere."

"I should like to see him!" thought Gillian, rhetorically. She had stayed in places where she would have defied a minnow to bathe.

The matricide of one's mother tongue becomes tedious to those who are used to it. No doubt he could talk

some language better than English. She would try Italian. It was evidently a relief. Antinöus betrayed it.

"It is poetry you are about to read," he remarked, anxious to continue the conversation thus fortuitously placed in his path, and looking at the little lines on her open page.

"Yes. About Odysseus. He came sailing down here — on his way to Scylla and Charybdis."

"I also am Greek," said Antinöus, as if Odysseus had been his uncle. "You read Homer?"

"Not I. This is in English."

"Was there, then, an English Homer?"

"Not exactly. But our English poets go to him and dig up his pearls to string together for us swine."

The mixture of classical and scriptural metaphor was beyond Antinöus, and small blame to him; but he endeavoured to look intelligent.

"I would not, however," he observed, "suffer any one else but the *Signorina* to talk of swine in this — neighbourhood."

Gillian was not listening very carefully, nor was she thinking much about him; she was thinking of Antinöus, or rather of the statue of him at Naples. For of the unhappy youth and his story she knew nothing. It was not lost upon her that the young Greek's beauty was somehow of inferior quality to the statue's, nevertheless it was the most singularly perfect she had ever seen in a living man. It must be wonderful to be so beautiful as that; and he and Antinöus had at least this in common, that neither seemed to have any consciousness of his beauty. The stranger's manners were very simple, entirely free from affectation or posturing; his eyes, unlike her own, were nearly black, not sad, like the marble eyes of

Antinöus, but scarcely ever smiling. Neither had the curved lips any haunting smile that hovered about them for ever without alighting.

"My name," he said presently, "is not so long or difficult as some of ours — Eustachio Zante."

"It sounds like Italian."

"We are from the Ionian Islands: at least, my great-grandfather was. My grandfather was a consul in the Levant — at Smyrna. My father was also a consul — at Jaffa. And now I am a vice-consul at Tripoli."

"Also in the Levant," suggested Gillian.

"No, the other Tripoli, in Barbary. It is easy to come thence to Messina by the Rubattino boats; that is how I am here — on a little holiday."

He did not look as if he were overworked at any time.

"Perhaps we shall go to Tripoli. My father talks of it."

"Mr. Pridd? Or is he Lord Pridd: all Englishmen are lords, are they not?"

"Oh no. Several are not, even now. But if my father were a lord his title would not probably be Pridd. That lady who sat by him at dinner is no relation. Our name is Thesiger. Gillian Thesiger is my own."

"I am sorry I made a mistake. The lady did not look like your mother. I did not think of that."

He did not seem at all inquisitive: and Gillian did not accuse him of telling his own name to arrive at hers. If he had been curious about it, he could easily have found it out at the Naumachia.

"I am also an English subject," he said. "Is it not odd? You see, my father was born in Corfu, during a visit his parents paid to their home: and the islands were yours then. As it happens, I was born at Malta,

where my father was vice-consul, before he was promoted to the consulate at Jaffa. So we are fellow-subjects in spite of my being a Greek."

He certainly did not look like an Englishman, wherever he was born. Neither would an Englishman have told a stranger so many family details.

"I have never been in England," Gillian told him. "We are always moving about. My father paints pictures, and he wanders everywhere to find them."

"Has he painted yours?"

"Yes, not long ago."

"I would like to see that portrait. Do you mind my saying that?"

"Not a bit. It happens to be a very good portrait. And I have seen yours already: so it is fair you should see mine."

Eustachio was looking out across the water, and seemed to be watching a boat, with a huge lateen sail, on its way down to Scylla and Charybdis.

He turned to her with mild surprise.

"My portrait has never been painted," he said.

"It is in the Museo at Naples," she declared, smiling. "Have you been there?"

"No. You mean there is a picture there that is like me?"

"It is not a picture."

"Oh, a statue, I suppose. The Greek type is common enough in the antique statues, even when they were made by Romans."

Could he really fancy himself of any common Greek type? she had seen scores of Greeks, but never any one in the least like him.

He did not ask whose statue it was, and she would not have told him if he had.

He looked after the boat that ran smoothly before a fresh breeze in a hurry for Scylla and Charybdis.

"I wish you would come to Tripoli," he observed.

"Is it interesting?"

"No. At least it does not interest me. It is purely an African town. There is no civilisation at all."

"That would not trouble us much. And Africa would be a change. I have never been there. Tell me what Tripoli is like."

"There is nothing to describe; the sea in front; and, behind, the desert; between them the town, flattish, and rather mean. And a small oasis."

He pronounced it "wahziz," whereas she had been used to make the word three syllables—"Oh, Acis!"

"In the town you may say there is not even wheeled traffic, only camels. But one can drive outside — if there were anywhere to drive to."

"One could drive to Cape Town if one liked."

"It is not very near. And you would get tired of the desert on your way."

"I don't know; I am tired of towns."

He did not understand this. In towns one is not bored, he considered. But Miss Thesiger was English, and he understood they were an odd people.

"All the more, then, I wish you would come to Tripoli. It would be interesting to see how you liked the desert."

"What is it like?"

"It is not like anything. It is the desert. Sand, and sand, and sand; but not yellow, or orange, like this sand. Dull grey or brown: and hillocks."

"Are there Bedouins?"

"I admit there are. They would not, however, trouble you."

"They would not trouble me in the least. I should want them."

"Want them!"

"Yes, I am all for Bedouins. There are no Bedouins in the hotels here."

He laughed a little.

"Well no, though the Naumachia is not princely. One hotel in Tripoli is nearly as good — the Hotel Venezia."

"Why on earth 'Venezia'? I expected something Arabic."

"Oh, if you would insist on a *funduk*, you could easily be accommodated. I imagine one night of it would satisfy you."

CHAPTER V

"M. Zante wants us to go to Tripoli," Gillian told her father. "To encourage us he assures me it is a hateful spot."

She had introduced the Greek to Mr. Thesiger, "in exchange for Miss Pridd."

"I am afraid," said Eustachio, "I was merely selfishly thinking of myself. I should like to *faire les honneurs*." He explained to Mr. Thesiger that there was no civilisation at Tripoli.

"You may imagine, monsieur, what a treat it would be to entertain people like yourselves. Except the consular families there is no one."

Mr. Thesiger did not actually promise to go, but Gillian perceived that he was not discouraged.

"An entirely local colour," she heard him thinking.

"I am a painter," he said aloud, "and fresh scenes are invaluable. I would like to paint the desert."

Eustachio stared. Mad indeed must be these English!

"It would, at all events, be easy," he declared; "you would only need two colours — grey and brown."

Mr. Thesiger smiled, and his smile was blandly superior. He knew better. What should a young Greek vice-consul know of atmosphere, and sky-effects, and lights and shadows?

"Our consulate," Eustachio observed modestly, "is not insufferable. There is a garden. And the rooms are large. Of the furniture I will not boast. It was wrecked out of the ark. And our cook is not a *cordon-*

bleu. But I doubt if you would care to paint him — he is an Arab."

"I daresay I should like to paint him, then; if he were a French *cordon-bleu* it is quite certain I should not."

Eustachio had met English people before — there was, for instance, the family of H. B. Majesty's Consul at Tripoli, very nice people, who unfortunately did not like him. But he did not think he had ever met English people of quite the same class as the Thesigers. He was not so simple as his conversation, and he did not in the least suppose that all English gentlemen are lords. The Thesigers, he believed, did belong to that class in spite of their being untitled.

In one thing he was mistaken. He made up his mind that they were well off, even rich. Both father and daughter were well dressed, and Gillian's rings were not such as poor people generally possess. They talked of travelling here and there, and Mr. Thesiger knew all the best hotels in Europe; that sort of going about, Eustachio was sure, is expensive. All English people have hobbies, and Mr. Thesiger's was evidently painting. It did not occur to the young Greek that without the painting this aristocratic English gentleman would not have had many hundreds a year to live on.

He speedily became quite intimate with them both, as scores and scores of young men had done before him. It did not enter Mr. Thesiger's head to apprehend a flirtation. He had always done the flirting himself — what there was of it. Gillian had made friends everywhere; friends whom she had seemed to forget as easily as she had made them. And Eustachio's manners were not flirtatious. He never became familiar, and never gave them too much of his society. If any

one had appealed to him on the subject, Mr. Thesiger would probably not have been ready to admit that M. Zante was really a gentleman; but there was nobody to appeal, and meanwhile Eustachio was pleasant enough.

Mr. Thesiger knew a gentleman very well when he saw one, but he never would have thought of applying quite such rigid tests to a well-behaved, presentable Greek as he would have applied, searchingly, to an Englishman. M. Zante was presented to Miss Pridd, though it was not explained to her that he had at first supposed her to be Gillian's mother, and had subsequently declared the idea to be absurd.

Deaf as she was, the old lady had sharp eyes, and might very well have admired the young man's really marvellous beauty. But she did not admire him at all, and disliked him quite warmly. Nevertheless she was too courteous to say so to the Thesigers, who were evidently taken with him.

It must not be supposed that Gillian and Eustachio spent their time now wandering about together, though their first interview had been rather protracted, and had been quickly followed by his introduction to her father.

Gillian wandered about chiefly alone, or sat near her father, reading, while he painted. At meals they did meet, and father and daughter would talk to him, Mr. Thesiger doing more than half of the talking. But Miss Pridd still sat on his left, and he was as civil as ever. Then Gillian would talk to Eustachio, who had moved over to their side of the table.

"Miss Pridd is charming," he observed one night. "Mr. Thesiger admires her, eh?"

"Papa would flirt with Minerva if she sat next him. An excellent habit; it prevents any danger of his getting married."

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Eustachio did not understand this. But he looked as if he did, and smiled because Gillian had done so. In order to be a good-for-nothing young man it is not necessary to be exceptionally intelligent. He certainly was not clever, though shrewd in particular matters. A pedestrian craftiness is commonly found in company with a very mediocre mental capacity.

Eustachio's great asset was his beauty and his singular air of being unconscious of it. He was fully conscious of it, but, to do him justice, he was not an atom vain. Really marvellous beauty seldom is.

"Minerva," he remarked; "that is Pallas Athene, the goddess of divine thought. Miss Pridd's thoughts, then, are divine? That is a pity."

"Why?"

"Because I do not stand high in them. I am glad it is only Miss Pridd who is Athene."

Gillian laughed. She was quite aware that Miss Pridd did not appreciate her neighbour. But did it matter? Eustachio, however, was annoyed by it, and had a grudge against the insignificant old maid. Though not vain of his looks, it irritated him to be seen through. If a dog snarled at him, with doggish instinct, he longed to hang the beast. Why should that pale-eyed old spinster see through him, when two obviously cleverer people like the Thesigers were ready to take him on trust?

"Except that she has grey eyes, I do not see that Miss Pridd reminds one particularly of Athene," said Gillian. "I do not exactly remember Athene . . . but it was not my idea. I only said papa would flirt with Minerva if she were there. He does it on principle with any unlikely person."

Eustachio had not hitherto supposed that flirting is conducted out of a sense of high principle. He endeavoured not to look surprised.

"It pleases them, you see," explained Gillian, "and does not hurt him."

"It evidently pleases him: might it not hurt them? If I were Miss Pridd, I should look forward to being your step-mother."

"You would find me a tiger of a step-daughter." Gillian laughed very cheerfully; but, without looking at her, he wondered if she could be a tiger. He did not need to look at her to remember her face, with its brilliant, peculiar colouring as to eyes and skin.

Eustachio, however, was not nervous, and the tiger notion did not alarm him. Some men can tame those fiery creatures.

The two officers of Carabinieri already detested Eustachio. They talked no more aloud about Milan and Turin, but kept their conversation to themselves, or doled out scraps of it to the syndic. It was evident that they were not to share the intimacies of the other end of the short table. And why not? The Greek, they felt assured was not a whit their social superior, and they unanimously condemned him as capable of every villainy. It was hard on them that they could not, like the equally discontented hero of Locksley Hall, "dip into the future."

The present, however, sufficed them.

"These travelling English," they agreed, on the way home, "how they are *sciocchi* about the chance strangers they meet!"

To their thinking, it was clear as noonday that the Greek was making love to Miss Thesiger, and that Mr. Thesiger had not the least objection. It did not occur to them that the English gentleman had known his daughter all her life, and had never known her entangled in a love-affair. Nor did they suspect that the affable foreigner was as proud as Lucifer, and

would be just as civil to the *padrone* of the Naumachia as he was to Eustachio, and just as likely to be on his guard against the handsome youth who carried out his easel and big umbrella as against the Greek, in quality of suitor for his daughter.

CHAPTER VI

Mr. Thesiger painted quite a number of pictures at Taormina, ignoring Etna with a sound professional instinct. The truth is that the marvellous mountain does not condescend to let itself be painted. There is altogether too much of it.

"One would want a canvas as big as the Piazza di San Pietro," he assured his daughter.

"It would be funny to see you running about over it, assaulting it here and there with your brushes."

Mr. Thesiger had a thousand good points, like all indifferently estimable people, and one of his best was his absence of touchiness. He jumped to her idea at once, and laughed at it.

"Whether it hangs in the air like a monstrous lantern, or tramples on the valleys, and thrusts forward to crush you, as solid as death, it is always beyond me," he confessed frankly; and painted bits and corners that he knew thoroughly what to do with.

Of course, in that season of blinding August, he did not expect to sell his pictures there. As soon as they were dry they went off to an agent in London, and Mr. Thesiger got excellent cheques instead of them.

Taormina is, no doubt, inexhaustible, but Mr. Thesiger became exhausted himself.

"The beauties of nature," he told Gillian, "are distributed like wealth. One person starves and another is rich enough to make you sick. Let us go to Tripoli. Eustachio swears it is hideous. I can't mind my own business here. While I am painting at one place, I am assailed by the memory of a better I saw

on the way to it. The buying public won't stand Taormina for ever: *toujours perdrix*, you know. And there's no credit to be got out of it. At best one's pictures are bad parodies of the originals. Let us see if I can't manipulate that desert our friend says needs only two colours."

Eustachio was no longer at Taormina: these remarks of Mr. Thesiger's were made weeks and weeks after their arrival, and the Greek had gone away after a fortnight. They packed their boxes and went on to Messina, which looks more beautiful from the sea than it really is.

"The houses have an air as if no one interesting had ever lived in them," Mr. Thesiger declared, "and as if nobody at all lived in them now." [1]

Nevertheless they remained a week or two, and Mr. Thesiger painted three or four pictures. The Piazza del Duomo made a fine one, and another was provided by the almost deserted convent of San Gregorio, or rather the view from it.

"Paint the convent, too," suggested Gillian.

"Perhaps I will. It looks like the result of an intrigue between the Kremlin and a church of the Rinascimento."

Thus irreverently spoke her father of Andrea Calamech's *fantasia* in richness.

All the same he made three pictures: one of the view outside, towards Calabria; one of the convent church; and one of its interior, for the sake of the colouring.

"C'est magnifique; mais ce n'est pas le goût," he declared.

"For my part, I never worry about taste. I like all these *pietre dure*. If it is pretty what does it matter that it oughtn't to be?" Gillian asked.

[1] This was written before the earthquake.

One day they drove out to the Faro.

"You might paint Scylla and Charybdis," she told him.

"There's Scylla all right, but Charybdis?"

"Unseen dangers are the most exciting. Paint the rock."

"And every one will ask, 'Where on earth is Charybdis?'"

"Not they. No one remembers which is which: and they won't want to display their ignorance. Besides, that's the way. I read a book called *Death and the Lady;* there was any amount of death in it, but nothing approaching to a lady."

But Mr. Thesiger declined Scylla and Charybdis.

"It is such a harmless-looking rock," he complained. "No one but Ulysses, with his *penchant* for telling fibs, would have pretended it was formidable. He knew no one, in his town, would come and see."

"Is any one frightened of Scylla now?" Gillian inquired of the *cocchiere.*

"Ruffo-Scylla? The prince? No one ever dreamt of being frightened of him. He is an excellent person."

"There, I told you," laughed Mr. Thesiger. "How could I terrify the English with a Scylla whom the Sicilians declare to be merely amiable?"

But he consented to paint the Marina, with a group of boatmen gathered about Montorsoli's fountain, where Neptune holds the redoubtable Scylla and Charybdis in chains — allegorically personified, of course.

"I like his fountain in the Piazza del Duomo better," said Gillian.

"That shows you *have* taste after all. And the palm-trees help. But Neptune, for all his bumptiousness, makes an easier picture."

These architectural subjects did not irritate Gillian

like the natural subjects: it seemed more decent to make pictures and money out of them.

"Why not do the inside of the Duomo too?" she asked. "The high altar and the columns make a good study in Christianity and heathenism."

"Which is which?" inquired Mr. Thesiger.

"Well, Neptune had to give up his columns, so I suppose they were conceived in iniquity like David: and it is quite certain that the altar never owed itself to Greek art."

"It cost three million francs."

"Evidently. And really it would look fine in a picture. The canons, too, would be splendid. I wish *I* could paint their tied up *cappa magna*."

"Plural, my dear; *cappe magne*."

Mr. Thesiger corrected his daughter's grammar, but he had often found her eye for a picture worth trusting to, and the interior of the cathedral, with the canons at vespers, turned out excellently.

"You have a much finer artist's eye than I have," he often assured her. "If you would only learn to paint, you would paint far better pictures than mine."

"That would be horrid of me: all the same, I should not."

"Yes; if you could only translate what you see into paint, you would paint poems. I am a craftsman that knows his tools, but you are an artist—though you don't know how to paint. It often happens that the thing I try to paint is not what *I* see, but what you have described to me in half-a-dozen phrases."

There was no greatness whatever about Mr. Thesiger, but, oddly enough, there were no littlenesses. He would have wished to be a great artist, as Martin Tupper would probably have liked to be a great poet, but he did not deceive himself into supposing that he was one: nor did he really strive to make himself one.

He was industrious in a slothful fashion, content to be technically rather good, and rapidly productive, because quick production brought in speedy results, without any of an enthusiast's almost agonised struggle to attain whatever perfection God might vouchsafe to him.

And this contentedness of his with painting what would bring an easy profit was a part of the ground of Gillian's discontent. She would have respected the painting if it had been the irrepressible expression of an artist's ambition. But she knew that her father had a rather touching frankness about his limitations, and this she was able to perceive was a rare quality.

She had not the heart to tell him that he might as well aim at real eminence instead of good-naturedly contenting himself with being a successful and facile producer of extremely pretty and well-painted landscapes which always fell short of genius.

"Messina," he said, "is undoubtedly a dull place: and a big dull place is much worse than a little one. Nobody minds Verona being dull, or Rimini. All the same, I am rather glad we came. Look at that man, with the little table, writing a love-letter for that young fisherman who can't write. One would not see that in England. Isn't it southern and mediæval? A scribe — fancy a scribe with a little table, writing people's letters for them in the street in Birmingham."

"Does the young man tell him what to say, do you think? or does he invent it?"

"He invents most of it, I expect. The fisherman only gives the heads. The letter is probably rather magnificent."

They strolled on and came to a broad street with dullish-looking shops on one side: the other side was ever so far off, and consisted of the backs of warehouses.

Here a number of people, seated on little chairs that might have been borrowed from a church, were listening to a man who was declaiming with extreme vehemence. He stood on a tiny platform, on which he had hardly room to start back in horror, which he had constantly occasion to do.

"In England," said Mr. Thesiger, "he would be a political agitator telling lies at a fixed salary. Here he is telling them a *Novello*, and they give him what they like at the end of it. How I hate education! If all these delighted creatures could read there would be no such a calling as his. Don't you like their leisure, too? These people do understand that life is long enough to be happy in. Of course they are as poor as rats, and live on macaroni and tomato-pulp, or a little fish, and their good black wine. And they like it, and don't feel it necessary to beat their wives every Saturday night, as the last refinement of the pleasure of getting drunk."

Gillian laughed, and picked no holes in her father's pleasures: she knew nothing of England, and his generalisations did not mean for her more than he intended to convey.

The scene was southern and picturesque, with a quaint archaic smack about it: that was all, and Gillian quite understood. The professional story-teller was certainly good at his trade. She felt sure that she could have understood the gist of it all even if she had been ignorant of Italian: not that he spoke Italian, but Sicilian. His action was generously expressive, his voice was well managed, he acted his story while he told it.

Sometimes there were shrieks of laughter, never at him, and sometimes volleys of hisses, never intended for the narrator, but for the villain of his tale. A British censor might have refused to license the piece for dra-

matic representation, for the British censor quite understands the British public. But it is quite possible that a duly licensed English play would have made this primitive audience stare. There were passions enough in the tale, love and jealousy and murder, but they were straightforward, primary, above-board passions; there was nothing subterraneous, there was no innuendo; decent words never suggested indecent ideas; above all, there was no adroit hinting that wrong is really right, and common right uncommon wrong.

Mr. Thesiger had not the smallest scruple in letting his daughter listen to it. He was more Bohemian than the ordinary British parent, but he would have dragged her away almost by the hair of her head from ever so many theatres in London.

CHAPTER VII

The boat that took them to Tripoli was quite as comfortable as either of them wanted. The cabins were not at all bad, and the food was good, if somewhat southern. And it was served on deck.

"Certainly you can have a bath," declared the Maestro di Camera to Mr. Thesiger: not that he said "You"— that Mr. Thesiger would have resented extremely. To be addressed in the second person by a Maestro di Camera would have struck him as revolutionary indeed.

"There is a very good bath, for gentlemen of the first class. I will see that it is ready. We keep the melons in it — it will not take ten minutes."

Here and there on the deck were little camps of Arab pilgrims, returning from Mecca: or so the Maestro di Camera averred. Every Moslem traveller is an Arab pilgrim to the Christian official.

Each camp consisted of an Arab gentleman and an Arab lady, an Arab nurse, and a small Arab with big eyes, who was generally a son, but was accidentally a daughter now and then. They sat still, on highly appropriate rugs and cushions, the lady and the nurse never budging, though the head of the family would occasionally venture afield as far as the capstan, which he regarded with restrained curiosity as a probable Christian symbol.

Nobody talked to them, and they did not seem to talk much to each other. Of course Mr. Thesiger would have loved to plunge into conversation: but Arabic was not one of his countless accomplishments.

He would try the Arab gentleman in French, if he could catch him in an unguarded moment, and if French failed, would see what Italian could do: but not often with large results.

The Arab gentleman would mostly smile, in a ponderously grave manner, and wave his hand cautiously: but, as a rule, declined to admit that he knew either French or Italian.

One of them, indeed, in reply to a leading question as to the sort of country around Tripoli, did say solemnly:

"Queen Victoria is a most respectable lady."

The respectability of his sovereign was too much of a first principle to interest Mr. Thesiger. He did not care for axioms.

He desired to talk of Barbary; his Moslem friend seemed determined to talk of England or not at all. Mr. Thesiger, having stated the excellence of Queen Victoria in terms which admitted of no further discussion, inquired if there were any hills near Tripoli.

"There are no hills. There is a low range of mountains several days' journey inland. Is Gladstone the family name of your monarchs?"

"Anything but!" Mr. Thesiger replied with the liveliest decision. "Mr. Gladstone is merely Prime Minister — Grand Vizier, you understand. Sent from heaven for our sins."

"Ah! sent from heaven. I have read — in a newspaper — that he claims to be Elder Brother of your Trinity."

Mr. Thesiger wished that Gillian had been there to hear.

"That," he explained, "is merely an honour, a sort of title of distinction. . . . And are there no rivers in Tripolitana?"

"None. . . . So in your country the Grand

Viziers are accorded divine honours. Our Sultan is only Khalif, or representative of the Prophet. The English are a proud people."

The Moorish gentleman looked pleased; he was evidently remarkably intelligent, and felt that he was adding a good deal to his knowledge of the ubiquitous Giaour.

But Mr. Thesiger was less satisfied.

"There are Roman remains at Tripoli, I understand. Anything considerable?"

"Perhaps; I do not know," the Moorish gentleman replied, tolerantly waving his hand. "I do not reside there, but at Benghâzi. England, they tell me, is the largest country in the world: how much larger, for instance, than Africa?"

"England is about one-eighth of the size of Tripoli — I mean the province of Tripolitana," Mr. Thesiger declared, with what his Arab friend considered matchless effrontery.

He had heard much of British pride, but this false humility struck him as singularly repulsive — almost impertinent. He opened his hands, and smiled a smile that was at one deprecatory and self-respecting.

"I am an Oriental, and merely a true believer," it seemed to say. "Why should the infidel mock at me?"

He entirely failed to perceive whatever point Mr. Thesiger had: the idea of great littleness did not occur to him. Like all Englishmen who are fond of complaining of his country, Mr. Thesiger was incurably proud of it. After all, it had only one fault — it had never quite appreciated him.

"England," he observed smilingly, "can look after itself. I come to Africa to see something else. Do tell me about your own country."

The Moor became instantly guarded. Why should the Giaour wish for information about his country?

He retreated on his family, and Mr. Thesiger had the capstan to himself. When they met again the gentleman from Benghâzi had the complacent air of a diplomat who has not been betrayed into indiscretion. He smiled still, but his smile was civilly triumphant.

"These Orientals," observed Mr. Thesiger to his daughter, as one who had studied all the East, "are dull dogs, who think it clever not to bark."

"Perhaps your Moorish friend had nothing to say: if so, it was rather sensible of him not to say it. The rarest of gifts in Europe."

They arrived at Tripoli in the forenoon, in front of a lively north wind, and the air was fresh and pleasant.

"Certainly it doesn't look much from the sea," Mr. Thesiger confessed with some disparagement. His Moorish friend had rather annoyed him with Tripoli.

"Think how lovely Messina looks from the sea! Perhaps Tripoli is, like the king's daughter, all glorious within."

A good many boats came out to the ship. In one of them sat a meagre, politely-smiling Italian, who called out to them, "Your hotel, signori," and pointed to a flag bearing the legend "H. Venezia" fluttering in the stern of his boat.

"That is the hotel Eustachio told us about. He said it was the best."

A youth of nineteen or twenty, ostensibly Arab, but with a Numidian dash, came on board and made straight for them.

"Bringali," he explained. "Your servant, sir."

He did not say "Your servant, sir," in the manner of an eighteenth century gentleman about to run you through with his sword, but rather as a family retainer who jogs your memory.

Bringali had a pleasant face, and an intelligent expression: he walked well, and held himself almost

proudly. Mr. Thesiger had heard of the cringing Oriental, but there was no cringing about Bringali.

"A sort of dragoman, I suppose," observed Mr. Thesiger. "One might do worse than take him. It is cheaper to be cheated by one person than by everybody."

Bringali knew scarcely any English — French, Italian, and Arabic were his languages — but he naturally caught the word "dragoman," and was flattered. The word "cheat" he had also heard before.

"Non son' io ingannatore," he said coolly. "Let his Excellency try."

He took it for granted he would be tried.

"Which are your luggages?" he asked, and seemed able to recognise them without further information. He pounced on them instinctively, and called to some porters to come up out of a boat and take them.

"We go first to the dogana," he explained, always in Italian. "It is not much. Five minutes. Once your turn comes."

It really was not much. As soon as the custom-house people had perceived that Mr. and Miss Thesiger were not Italians they became gravely civil. Bringali assured them consequentially that Mr. Thesiger was his master: he did it with all the air of a British subject newly landed in the country, as if none of the officials had ever clapped eyes on him before. He knew by instinct which were Gillian's boxes, and took it for granted, with his finest air, that no custom-house officer would dream of peering into them.

"Arms or ammunition? Of course not. The signorina is not come to shoot camels with pistols. My master has no whisky. I told you so. It is finished."

Gillian was too much interested in the other luggage to pay undivided attention to her own. Some of the boxes were so interesting. There were absolute coffers,

painted green and crimson and blue, in gorgeous designs of unearthly flowers on a gold ground; and oddly-shaped trunks, to fit on a camel, of hairy hide, studded with huge brass or copper nails.

All the time the padrone of the Albergo Venezia hovered near, trying to assert himself, but utterly overborne by Bringali. He was European and Christian, like his visitors, and came from the haughty city of Venice, but Signor Murano was no match for the Arab lad half his age.

"Bringali is a master-mind," declared Mr. Thesiger in English. "See how the Venetian succumbs to him."

And yet Bringali was constantly dependent on the good word of the little hotel-keeper, and these English might be gone for ever in three or four days. It made no difference. He seemed to take a calm pleasure in impressing on the Venetian that his master was an English signore.

"Now for the hotel," said Bringali, when he had reduced all the custom-house people to the obedience of reason. "Your Excellency might give that Turk a franc — he is the head of them all."

Mr. Thesiger felt awkward, for the Turk wore a fine uniform, and had a Grand Vizier manner, but he administered the franc, which was accepted unconsciously, invisibly, but without protest.

"And now for the hotel," repeated Bringali; "it is not exactly like an hotel in London."

Bringali's air of superiority might have deceived the very elect: but Mr. Thesiger was not of the elect, and he was certain that his new-found Arab retainer had never set foot in Europe.

Signor Murano winced, but ventured on no reproof.

"Hotels are to fit travellers," he remarked meekly. "At Tripoli, English lords are rarities."

"That is a blessing, at all events," said Mr. Thesiger.

They walked out of the gaunt custom-house, and began to move uphill into the narrow streets, Signor Murano endeavouring to connect himself with the party, and Bringali succeeding.

"That is a Roman arch," he observed disparagingly. "They came here once — Italians: and they found it well to go away. That is how it is."

The arch seemed inclined to sink into the sand, but it was a fine one, all the same.

"Wonderful people!" said Mr. Thesiger. "Wherever you go you find them — even here on the lips of the desert."

Signor Murano glanced at the arch half-heartedly. He knew Bringali was cheapening it. But it was absurd to confound the Romans with Venice. He did not care twelve dates for the Romans.

Of course those Romans came from Italy, like the Pope and common sense, but it was a new idea to confound all of the peninsula under the generic name of Italian.

CHAPTER VIII

The streets were quite unlike any that Mr. Thesiger had even seen, and he was already sure they had been right to come to Tripoli. They were all narrow and unpaved, all silent so far as any noise of traffic went, though there was a subdued hum of decorous, leisurely humanity. There were no carriages, only a few silent-footed camels moving along as if it could not matter to any one when they arrived anywhere. Some of the streets were long pergolas, with gourds, through whose leaves the sun smote with a brilliant green coolness, scrambling over the latticed roof.

It was Mr. Thesiger's first glimpse of the Orient, and, as it happened, Tripoli was really more Oriental than many towns thousands of miles further east. The travelled Englishman, especially if he were fairly stupid, who had been in Cairo or Bombay, Constantinople or Benares, would have said that there was nothing whatever to see; but Mr. Thesiger and his daughter found plenty.

"It is like jumping back a thousand years," he declared with enthusiasm. To feel centuries behind the times was to him as stimulating as to the progressive it is to flatter himself he is ages ahead of them.

There is no European quarter in Tripoli: it is all unmitigated Islam. And there is even now a large caravan trade with interior Africa; a quarter of a century ago there was much more. So that in the narrow street, wholly unlike any street he had ever yet been in, he saw groups of men of many different tribes and even races, Libyans, Berbers, and true desert

Arabs, Moors, Numidians, and men of Fezzan. Of course he did not know yet to what people they belonged, but he noted the distinctions of dress and type, and found them all interesting and picturesque.

"How well-bred they are," he said. "If two of *them* were to be walking about a provincial town at home, how they would be stared at and followed, laughed at and remarked upon. Every one of them is dignified."

"Oh, papa, that man is selling cream-tarts! I wish I could ask him if they have pepper in them."

"How nice of you to remember that. Is it not like the Arabian Nights?"

Two men were playing "damas," the board set on a low inlaid stool in the street. There was no wheeled traffic to disturb them.

Presently a string of camels came idly along, twisting their long necks conceitedly from side to side.

There were no shops with glass fronts, though the whole street was a bazaar, with things to sell everywhere; inlaid furniture, some of which looked old; carpets, some of which were fine; glazed pottery and plain — but all of beautiful shapes as old as Abraham.

"In Europe," observed Mr. Thesiger, who was suffering from a determination of appreciation to the brain, "shopping is the most vulgar of occupations. Here it would be an artistic pastime. You may be sure nothing has any particular price — only what the vendor can get: he leaves it to Allah."

Gillian smiled acquiescence, but had no idea of laughing. She was glad that they had come. Her father was more apt to be bored than enthusiastic, and now he was not even thinking of what "would paint."

"They are not really streets," he continued. "At least they are not like any streets we know. Sort of busy lanes. You see most of the houses have only

one story, none more than two. Look at these women."

Half-a-dozen women, with steeples on their heads, came along; from the yard-high conical hats flowed long, white veils.

"Israelite," explained Bringali when they had gone by.

The other women they met were altogether veiled, or wore the yashmak. But there were not many women of any sort in the streets. Yet there was no rude staring at the unveiled Giaour lady.

"All the same I feel rather brazen going about like this."

She asked Bringali if the people were scandalised.

"Certo, no. In London, it is known, ladies do not veil as ours do."

"I have never been in London," she remarked. And Bringali looked almost as much pained as the Moorish gentleman from Benghâzi had been by her father's monstrous under-statement of the size of England.

They turned out of the long, shaded street of shops into one where there were none. Here the houses, though still quite low, were mostly of two storeys. They presented almost blank faces; the small doors did not look as if they ever opened, and many houses showed no windows to the street. What few windows there were had wooden lattices, or were defended by iron grills, bulging out at the bottom.

"Seclusion is the Oriental idea of home," explained Mr. Thesiger, who was sure he knew all about it. "Middle-class people here do not stick their best and most appalling ornaments in the window with the curtains behind them, so that no one inside could possibly see them."

He glowed with appreciation of "the East." Be-

fore bed-time he felt that he could write a book about it.

The Hotel Venezia had nothing Venetian about it except its name. It was, to say the truth, rather hard-favoured outside, and not luxurious within. To the street, a particularly narrow one, it presented a dull white front, broken by a small door, open however, and three or four narrow windows, all grilled. It was barely two storeys high, and one might have wondered where there could be room for even two guests.

Signor Murano waved a hand of meek proprietorship. "Ecco, il nostro hotellino!" he said with much less *aplomb* than if Bringali had not been there.

"Yes: this, indeed, is it," that youth declared with frank disparagement. "His Excellency is not in London."

"Thank heaven!" said Mr. Thesiger. "Where there are few promises," he added to his daughter, "few can be broken. It *must* be a little better than it looks."

But it wasn't much. Certainly there was more of it than appeared from the street, for it ran back eagerly. Inside there was a long, narrow courtyard, with palm trees, in tubs, that looked as if they would have preferred the desert; and almost all the rooms looked towards this *cortile*, none, however, directly, for their windows opened on to corridors, which did not make them airier or brighter.

The dining-room was upstairs and faced the street, a small, uninteresting room adorned with terrible portraits of the Italian sovereigns, and of Queen Victoria, and the old German Emperor in a helmet like the elder Miss Jenkinson's funeral bonnet.

It was inhabited by a numerous and active community of flies, who were presently joined by the Italian consul-general, an elderly stout gentleman of

extreme urbanity, in a suit of clothes which accentuated his tendency to obesity.

They were evidently not his best, for the Thesigers saw them no more during their stay. At dinner he appeared as a widower, and at subsequent luncheons as a sportsman, in checks of so colossal a design that even his broad back scarcely sufficed to do justice to the whole pattern. Gillian's room looked into the corridor, and was furnished with ugly modern Italian furniture of middle-class type. Mr. Thesiger's room opened out of it, and was, if possible, smaller, and had no furniture to speak of at all. There was a bed, stuffed with esparto grass, and one lean pillow of the same: and there was a washing-stand of unpainted deal, with a white basin that reminded Mr. Thesiger of stewards on board ship. In it, however, stood a porous earthenware jug, unglazed, of a pretty traditional form.

"Do come and look out of my window," Mr. Thesiger called out through the open door. "There's an Arab school opposite, and the children are learning the Korân."

As a matter of fact they were at that moment learning arithmetic, with square frames of variously coloured wooden beads, such as one sees in schools at home. But they really did have a lesson in the Korân presently, and Mr. Thesiger thoroughly enjoyed it. The room in which the children and their master were was on a level three or four feet lower than his own, and he could see in perfectly. It was much bigger than his, and had low divans all round, covered with blue and red cotton rugs; but the boys all sat on the floor, cross-legged, and swayed themselves rhythmically from side to side as they recited their texts in a nasal sing-song.

Of course one boy soon perceived that they were being watched, and immediately communicated the information to the rest, without stopping his gabbling of the lesson for a moment. They were not quite so naughty as European children, but one or two did seize the opportunity to squint diabolically, all smiled whenever they caught the stranger's eye, and one, who was probably a child of unusual piety, made a face at the unveiled Gillian. Having thus testified, he shook his head, out of time, and resumed his swaying with redoubled fervour. For a moment or two he did it with his eyes shut, then, curiosity being stronger than scruple, he opened one of them, and looked for the shocking Gillian again. He had better have had the merit of sticking to his principles, for she had gone back to her own room to unpack.

"It is odd," thought Mr. Thesiger complacently, "to look through a window into the East."

As a matter of fact his present longitude was about that of Stockholm, but Mr. Thesiger did not care sixpence for longitude. Fez is undoubtedly to the west of London, but it is none the less more Oriental.

"Children are young even in the East," he considered, "and it is pleasing to find that there are little Mohammedan prigs." Apparently there are little Mohammedan sneaks too, for, when the Koran lesson was over, a youthful informer sidled up to the schoolmaster and made him aware of the conduct of his overrighteous pupil.

The boy who had made ugly faces at Gillian was called up, and received several strokes with a leather strap upon his small brown feet. Mr. Thesiger could not help regarding him as rather a martyr, for Miss Thesiger, without even a hat, must have appeared scandalous. He went into her room to tell her of it.

"That boy will certainly grow up a fierce hater of Christians," she said. "If I am to have a bath it must be in my bed. There is no room anywhere else."

"As for me, I shall go to the Turkish baths — the Hammam, I mean," declared her father, making a grab at a word of more local colour.

"I wish I could. But no doubt it would be impossible. I suppose there are no Shammams, if that is the feminine of a Turkish bath."

"We will ask Bringali."

And Bringali stepped in. He had been standing outside till he might be wanted, much too respectful to permit himself to be hungry till his master and mistress had eaten, though they had breakfasted plentifully, and he had not, most likely, breakfasted at all.

"Do ladies go to the baths?"

"On certain days, and to certain baths — not everywhere." They could neither of them tell if he really thought it would be improper. He had no idea of finding anything they might decide on doing improper.

He evidently did not consider it at all indiscreet for him to be standing in Gillian's room, surveying her arrangements with an intelligent, incurious interest.

He had an excellent face; his fine eyes had a clear, honest expression, and there was nothing "animal," as we say, about his thick lips — as if sensuality were by no means a human failing.

Gillian might have ridden to Fezzan alone with him, and he would never have been anything but gravely respectful himself or have allowed any one else to be otherwise.

In the afternoon they went for a drive, going to the city gates to find a carriage.

CHAPTER IX

Bringali wanted to go and fetch a carriage, so that they could start from the hotel in it, and Signor Murano also urged this: it gave him a European sensation to see visitors driving from his door. But neither Gillian nor her father would hear of it.

"The street is certainly broad enough for one carriage," said Mr. Thesiger, "but nothing could possibly happen if we met another. We should have to remain there for ever."

"You would not meet another. Who else would be going for a drive?"

And Bringali looked as if, in so unlikely an event, he would be perfectly prepared to take the opposing vehicle to bits, and carry it piecemeal whence it came, rather than permit it to impede the progress of his own particular signori.

They were, however, firm. They liked the walk through the queer city, and there was abundance of time.

Presently they stopped to look at the stall of an old Arab fruit-seller. He had a high-featured, very dark face, and shining shallow eyes. His piles of melons and dates, figs, carubi-fruit (locusts), and tamarinds were pretty, and arranged artistically.

"He is, however, a cheat," observed Bringali in Italian, without prejudice. "See how he puts all the good dates on the top. Those underneath are squashy."

"Bother counsels of perfection," said Mr. Thesiger, impatient of criticism. "If one has a hare-lip one may grow a moustache."

"Scusi, signore," said Bringali meekly, trying not to glance at his new master's moustache. Gillian laughed.

"He thinks you have a hare-lip, papa."

This did not please Mr. Thesiger: he began to think Bringali officious.

Outside the city gate they found a carriage and any number of camels and Turkish soldiers, whose principal duty seemed to be to stare at them.

"That sloping road leads up to the governor's palace," Bringali informed them.

Nothing exactly palatial was to be seen, but there really was a sloping road.

"The Turkish viceroy is a pasha," observed Mr. Thesiger, anxious to impart information.

"I thought Tripoli belonged to Italy," said Gillian, to see what Bringali would think of her.

"Italy, indeed! Wait a bit, signorina!"

"It would be very wrong of Italy to try and take Tripoli," said Mr. Thesiger, who had evidently never heard of Egypt.

"She may try," murmured Bringali. "That is not forbidden. A goat may try to swallow a camel."

They got into their carriage, Bringali mounting the box beside the driver, a gentleman with a ravishing smile, but no language save Arabic.

"Ask him how old he is," called out Mr. Thesiger, who felt that he must converse at any price.

"Papa! How would *you* like it?"

"I shouldn't mind in the least. I should tell him at once. Bringali, you may tell him I am forty-one. You know, Gill, I married indecently young. Men have no business to marry at twenty."

The last time he had married at twenty-three. If it went on like this for any considerable period, Gillian knew he would have married before his birth.

"He doesn't know how old he is," said Bringali. "Nobody cares when he was born."

"All the same," declared Mr. Thesiger, "it is the proper way of beginning a conversation with an Arab. What is his name?"

"Selim-Bin-Muhammed."

"Ah! That means he is descended from the Prophet," explained Mr. Thesiger. "Birth is everything here: a cabman descended from the Prophet is nobler than a British peer descended from a bogus company."

"I suppose Benghâzi, where your talkative friend came from, is descended from Gâzi. Who was he?"

"Gehazi, no doubt. That is very interesting."

Bringali pointed out the old walls, which had an air of the European *medio-evo:* which was excusable, as they had been built by the Knights of Malta, between 1523 and 1550.

But Mr. Thesiger was not in a European frame of mind, and declared, generally, that they were "Saracenic."

"The Saracenic civilisation is most interesting," he declared. "Not barbaric, but Eastern."

"In Barbary," suggested Gillian, "something Barbaric would not be out of place."

Bringali glanced at the walls, and began to suspect there was more in them than he supposed. But he was wiser than his master, and was content to look intelligent.

"In this oasis," he said, after a quarter of an hour's silence, "the Karamanli are buried. These are their tombs."

The tombs were Oriental enough to satisfy Mr. Thesiger.

"The Karamanli," he explained, "were Beys who

made themselves independent of Turkey . . . for a considerable period."

"I wonder if they were as exactly alike as their tombs," said Gillian, "square bodies and round, flat heads."

"That," said Bringali, pointing to his right, "is a convent of friars."

In point of fact, a friar, thin and ascetic, was walking in the garden patch in front.

In Italy Mr. Thesiger doated on the friars. Without being particularly encumbered with any religion of his own, he preferred that of the south to what he called "Stodgy middle-class Northern Christianity." But he was displeased at the obtrusion of any form of Christianity here.

"Religion," he informed his daughter, "is geographical. A matter of latitude. In these countries Christianity is exotic."

"Exotic flowers are rather beautiful," suggested his daughter.

"But they are for the artificial taste. Orchids are not for the people."

He almost frowned at the innocent friar, who was saying his rosary, unsuspecting European criticism.

"They are good people," said Bringali, rather patronisingly, "though Italians. Everybody speaks well of them. They are charitable and friendly; they are, however, poor."

Bringali was poor enough himself, but it was a quality he disliked in other people, especially Europeans, whose business it was to be well off and addicted to spending.

Mr. Thesiger was thoroughly good-natured, and he almost instantly forgave the friar for being a European and a Christian like himself. By this time too, the Franciscan's sentry-like walking up and down had

brought him close to the carriage, and he did not seem to think it an interruption of his prayer to look up and smile.

"A good face," said Mr. Thesiger to his daughter. "It is wonderful how a family likeness runs in religious orders. Every other Jesuit is like St. Ignatius, and this frate has all the *fioretti* of St. Francis in his smile. . . ."

They drove on: Mr. Thesiger's thoughts, always easily set in a new train, were full of the sweet-faced friar.

"He never committed a sin in his life," he declared, "and yet, if one had to go to confession, he is just the man one would choose. He would never be shocked at other people's faults. Depend upon it there never was a Protestant saint."

"Do you think you could paint that friar?"

"I could not *sell* him. I should think it horrid, and one can't go on increasing our mobilised picture gallery. Oh, look at this camel with two soldiers on his back! Are they dear, Bringali?"

"Soldiers?"

"No, camels."

"That one would not cost more than a hundred and twenty francs."

"I really should like to buy one."

"You must pack him yourself, then," said Gillian. "He would not go into any box of mine."

Her father laughed.

"Is this the desert, Bringali?" he called out.

"This!" that youth replied, rather hurt. "This is certainly not the desert: it is the oasis of Tripoli."

"He says 'wahziz,' like M. Zante," observed Gillian.

"Where does the desert begin?"

"As soon as the trees stop — anywhere."

The trees were all date-palms, and men were picking

the yellow dates on some of them. They lay back in a linen strap which went round the straight trunk of the palm, their feet pressed against the rough bark.

"The Sultan gets one date in every ten," Mr. Thesiger informed his daughter, speaking English because he was not sure of his fact, and did not enjoy being contradicted by Bringali.

"Here's a garden," said Bringali. "Would you like to get down and look at it, signori?"

There was a high wall, rather shabby-looking, with a still more shabby gate: the carriage stopped, and they got out. The garden was not particularly pretty, though Tripoli is famous for its gardens, and has many beautiful ones attached to the houses in the city. This was far outside the walls, and seemed to be a sort of market-garden.

However it was shady, and went up and down more than one would have expected from the prevailing flatness of all the ground they had seen. And a huge well, out of which water was being pumped up, satisfied Mr. Thesiger's Oriental longings. He had never before seen bullocks pumping water by going round and round.

"I do like the yoke," he said; "it is just like an illustration in a picture-Bible we had at home: and the man with the goad is exactly like Jacob."

"I fancy," Gillian remarked, "that Jacob has a temper. See what a savage dig he gives with his goad when that white ox tries to stand still."

"Why should all the tempers belong to Christians? Islam would be an insufferable affair if every Mussulman was perfect."

The water came up in a string of little buckets that emptied themselves into an open trough, down which it ran till it escaped into a number of narrower troughs, and so found its way all about the garden.

"A much nicer way of irrigation than with hideous hydraulic pumps," said Mr. Thesiger, much pleased.

His daughter knew what he meant, and did not ask if, after all, this was not also a hydraulic pump.

CHAPTER X

It would have surprised Signor Murano if any one had accused his dinner at the Hotel Venezia of being Oriental: but it was undoubtedly peculiar.

It began with Yagourdh: a sort of thick milk of which everybody had about a pint in an ample white basin. Then came soup, more satisfying than satisfactory, and Gillian felt that she had dined. Three dishes of meat followed, each odder than the last: it was not roasted, but burnt *in* the fire, and was ashy outside, and ruddy within.

"Camel, no doubt," Mr. Thesiger averred, cleaving queer lumps off the funny little joints.

"*No* part of a camel could be so small," declared Gillian. "Perhaps it is vulture."

"It is the worst possible manners to put people off their food. 'Ate it or lave it,' as the Irish gentleman said."

"I should not mind laving it if I had anything bigger than a wineglass to lave it in."

Then came an indescribable sweet—not exactly a cake, and not like any known pudding, sticky and of inconceivable specific gravity.

Gillian betrayed signs of having eaten enough, and wanting to go away.

"Signorina," pleaded the Arab servant, "the fish is just ready; a most excellent fish. If your Excellency could wait one small five minutes more."

It really was a good fish, and the sauce was good too.

"You are wrong not to try it," said Mr. Thesiger. "It makes up for everything."

"I would if I could. . . . To-morrow night I will wait till after dessert for the fish; but really I can't now."

"The signorina finds she is not in London," said the Italian consul-general, with urbanity.

"I never was in London," Gillian admitted once more. She really was getting quite ashamed of it.

"No one else would be believed who said so of her," declared the consul-general, who had never been there himself.

"No, my daughter has never been in London; but nobody *lives* there, you know," said Mr. Thesiger.

The consul-general stared, though he tried not to.

"One *lives* in the country," explained the Englishman —"*nella campagna.*"

The consul-general knew the Campagna di Roma, and tried to picture a densely-populated wilderness.

"It is a brutal place, Tripoli, eh?" he observed, failing, and willing to attempt an easier subject.

"We think it delightful," said Gillian.

("Tutti sciocchi gli Inglesi," thought the consul.) "I am a widower," he said aloud, "and so I come here to eat. It is *tetro* having meals alone. All the same I have a cook who perishes from inoccupation. It would be an honour if you, signore, and you, signorina, would come to our consulate and be my guests. I have also a garden — a fine garden where you could take your coffee."

They thanked him and promised.

"But I like this coffee," said Mr. Thesiger. "I always like Turkish coffee."

(He really had tasted it before, years ago, at a Turkish bath in Paris.)

"It is like thick soup, which I prefer to clear," added Gillian, "there is more going on in it."

"Murano's cook can't make coffee," declared the con-

sul, with authority. "Wait till you have tasted mine."

He leant back in his chair and smiled with prospective hospitality. He was not remarkably impressed by the Englishman or his daughter, who appeared to have foolish notions — a congenital defect inherent, no doubt, in persons of their nationality: but Europeans were Europeans, and he was not too bourgeois himself to be unable to recognise that the Thesigers were of the best class. To entertain them would be a pleasing variation of the monotony of his exile.

He had hardly ceased to smile before a visitor was announced for the two strangers.

"Il Console Greco."

Certainly neither Gillian nor her father were surprised to see him."

"It is Eustachio," said Mr. Thesiger to his daughter, jumping up with a most welcoming air.

The Italian consul-general heard and noted the use of the Christian name, concluding thence that the traveller and his young colleague were intimate. Perhaps, if he had known as much sooner, he would not have been so promptly hospitable to them; for he did not feel that Eustachio was "simpatico."

Gillian also got up, and held out her hand with a friendly smile to the young Greek.

In that ugly and bare room he seemed more beautiful than ever. He shook hands warmly with them both. If he had lifted hers to his lips the elderly Italian, who was watching what happened in the looking-glass, would have thought it more correct. To shake hands with a young lady seemed to him very familiar. So also did it appear to Eustachio, but he rather liked to let his stout colleague see that he was familiar with these aristocratic English people.

They all sat down again — the consul-general had

risen very politely as soon as Gillian stood up — and Eustachio said with animation:

"You are good people: you keep your promises. Only you ought to have written to say you were coming, and I would have met you."

"We never promised to write," said Gillian.

("Not so intimate as he pretends," thought the Italian, "but they evidently know each other pretty well.")

He had a bottle of good wine, and now offered some of it to the others.

"I am afraid," he remarked jocularly, "that my young friend has been deceiving you, and making out that our beloved Tripoli was worth your visit."

"No: on the contrary he assured us that there was no sort of civilisation here," replied the Englishman.

The Italian did not seem particularly edified by this proof of his colleague's candour.

"Except the consular families," said Gillian. "He led us to build all our hopes on them."

"The English consul-general and his family are away," observed the Italian. "That is a pity: they are charming."

Gillian and her father did not mind. They did not travel in pursuit of their compatriots.

All this time Eustachio did not say much. He did not care: he would as lief do his talking when he could get his English friends to himself.

"I hope we shall meet the Turkish consul-general and *his* family," Gillian remarked, out of ignorance or mischief.

"There is no Turkish consul," said the Italian.

"It is a Turkish possession," explained Eustachio. "You do not, you know, have English consuls in England.

The Hellenic Government had no sheep's eyes to cast on Tripoli, and Eustachio enjoyed reminding his elderly, stout friend that it was not an Italian dependency.

The Italian consul-general had a name, which might as well have been mentioned sooner. Signore San Malato understood the Greek quite clearly, and did not love him any better. What was not so fair, it rather prejudiced him against the travellers.

"I must be going," he said presently, "there is work to be done in our chancellery. Our consulate here is important," he added to Mr. Thesiger. "I often envy our young friend his leisure."

"I never have anything to do," declared Eustachio. "There is never any friction between our people and the Government of his Imperial Majesty here."

He laughed gently, but not until Signore San Malato was almost out of the door.

"A delightful person — the Italian consul-general," observed Mr. Thesiger, not quite *sotto voce*. "He has been so hospitable as to invite us to his house."

"Stealing my guests," complained Eustachio very prettily. "An unfriendly act."

Mr. Thesiger explained that it was only to dinner.

"Oh, but you must dine with me too — not once, but continually. There is more than one coffee-pot in Tripoli."

Gillian laughed.

"Ah, but you have no garden to drink it in."

"Whoever heard of drinking a coffee-pot!" said her father.

"My garden is better than his," declared Eustachio. "It is true his house is better than mine. He also has more furniture; but mine will be furnished if you will come to it. Of course you will meet the same people everywhere. There are only the consular families."

"Tripoli is at all events hospitable," said Mr. Thesiger. "Gillian, how can we ask anybody back — here?"

Eustachio protested that nobody dreamt of being "asked back" by visitors. Nevertheless he did often dine with them, as it turned out, leaving an excellent cook of his own for the sake of their company.

"When is San Malato's dinner?" he asked.

"On Sunday."

"Well, this is Friday; to-morrow you must dine with me."

CHAPTER XI

On the following afternoon they all three went for a drive in the desert. Bringali was still on the box, but he felt that his nose was broken, and disliked Eustachio without hesitation.

"I told you it was nothing," observed the Greek, with a glance at the rolling flatness all around. "Yellowish grey, and greyish brown — that is all."

There were no palm-trees now: only wide stretches of neutral-tinted sand that hardly looked like sand. It was rather early in the afternoon, and the lighting was too clear.

Flat as it seemed the city had disappeared, and there was nothing anywhere but the sea of sand, whose rollers were as indistinguishable as those of the ocean when one sees it from far off.

"All the same, I like it," persisted Mr. Thesiger. "It is big, at all events."

"Much too big," agreed Eustachio.

"Anyway, there are the Bedouins," said Gillian. "Can you deny that those are Bedouins?"

"I would not wish to, since they please you."

From nowhere in particular, half-a-dozen horsemen, riding quickly nowhere in particular, cropped up out of the vast solitude. They were thin, dark men, with outrageously long guns slung across their saddles in front of them, or swinging at their backs. Their faces were like hawks', and if they wanted to look truculent they succeeded. A sort of greyish-white veil or scarf floated from the back of their heads; they rode their small horses splendidly, as if they had been born on them.

"Undoubtedly they are Bedouins," said Eustachio. "Five of them together are quite enough. With such rings the signorina is quite right to wear gloves."

Gillian laughed maliciously and tugged the gloves off.

"Papa, would it not be fun to be taken prisoners, and held to ransom in a Bedouin camp?"

"It would give your consulate a great deal of trouble," Eustachio suggested. "I am afraid you would spoil the excellent Mr. Williamson's leave."

("Of course our consul-general is a Scotchman," observed Mr. Thesiger in parenthesis.) "I don't know who would pay the ransom, Gill."

"Oh, our Government. What's the good of having a Government if they don't pay up?"

The Bedouins rode away, and disappeared as unaccountably as they had appeared.

Presently they came to a lonely ruined house, knee-deep in drifted sand.

"An old Roman house," explained Bringali, anxious to reassert himself.

"It is not Roman," said Eustachio, who knew as little about it as Bringali. "The Romans were too sensible to build houses out here in the desert."

"It is evidently Roman," declared Gillian. "There were Romans who liked solitude, like me and papa."

They got out and looked at the building, which may have been very interesting, but there was no one to explain it.

"Why are you cross?" asked Eustachio, getting Gillian to himself for a moment.

"I am never cross. But I won't have Bringali snubbed. He took charge of us when there was no one else."

"Because you were not kind enough to write and say when you were coming. These Arabs are always presuming."

"Bringali is never presuming. I like Arabs: they have such excellent eyes. I would trust myself with Bringali from here to Cape Town."

"You are still thinking of that trip? It is really a good way."

He said no more about Bringali, but Gillian could see that he did not like him. She put it down to narrow European prejudice against Arabs, and thought no more about it. How could it occur to such a girl as her that Eustachio was jealous because she had praised and seemed to like the lad? If she could have suspected such an idea in him, her own feeling towards him would never have grown to be what, to her great misfortune, it did.

Her father came round the corner of the house, and their very brief *tête-à-tête* was finished. Mr. Thesiger was talking with animation to Bringali: he too had an instinctive feeling that the lad had been shelved, and wanted to soothe him. In all such matters Gillian's father was thoroughly good-natured. We are always assuming that people who are good in little things are sure to be good also in great.

Bringali fell back and walked away to the carriage. The other three stood on the mound of the ruined house looking away over the desert. It ran to the sky everywhere, for though the sea was only half-a-dozen miles away one could catch no hint of it.

"Oh, Gill, look!" Mr. Thesiger begged in a voice of suppressed excitement.

She turned in the direction he pointed, and guessed at once that what she saw was a mirage.

It was not very like descriptions she had read, but it seemed to her more beautiful. One could hardly tell if it were a low horizon or hanging in the sky: and the things in it were much more vague and unearthly than the descriptions would lead one to expect. There cer-

tainly seemed to be trees, and there was what might be called a lake, but the water was as like sky and cloud as it was like any earthly water. It lay on the southern horizon, and there was no hint of any town reflected. The colours were exquisitely delicate, clearer and paler than those of a sunset, much less opaque than those of a real landscape. Eustachio saw by their faces that somehow the, to him, familiar spectacle impressed them: and he looked impressed too. There was no knowing what would strike these people.

"It is not a particularly good mirage," he observed. "If it was over there you would see Tripoli in it: but that would be too near."

As they watched, the appearance of the lake grew more lifelike, and its waters were rippled as by real waves. To Gillian its great charm was that it was not real: there are plenty of real palms and real lakes. Waters which no ship should ever traverse, trees whose shadow should never fall on any spot on earth, were far more interesting. No measurable Alp had ever given her the same feeling as the white cloud-mountains she knew no Alpinist could ever spoil.

Her face as she watched the mirage puzzled Eustachio, though he found it lovelier than ever. He might marry her, but could she ever belong to him? Would not some of her be always beyond his reach?

That her father's face was also changed did not matter: Eustachio put it down to the half-genuine, half-habitual propensity of an artist to see more in everything than there is. If artists only saw what all the world sees, how could they make original pictures?

But, hitherto, he had fancied that Gillian was rather bored by pictures, which was satisfactory, as he also thought them a bore. In spite of his being a Greek, and in spite of his own singular beauty, he almost entirely lacked the artistic sense. He was hardly aware of

beauty except in human beings, and in them the mere beauty of form was all that he could recognise; expression and character were alike illegible to him. As they drove back he was not quite satisfied. He had only succeeded in obtaining five minutes of *tête-à-tête*, and during those few minutes he thought Gillian had wanted to snub him. That was a mistake: she had merely wished to defend some one else from being snubbed.

The day was drawing in before they got back, and the lights were altogether different now. The desert had turned blood-red, with long waves of purple-brown running here and there. The eastern sky was of a marvellous, brilliantly pale green. The city walls, as they rose out of the waves of sand, were of a livid crimson.

"It would want more than two colours to paint it now," said Mr. Thesiger triumphantly.

CHAPTER XII

Eustachio made a good host, and did the honours with a graciousness that was like good breeding. He was not at all simple, but he had the air of it. He was nearly thirty, and looked like a handsome youth; he was cunning, and looked innocent; he was not clever, and contrived to appear intelligent.

He had not overpraised his house, which was picturesque, if rather bare. It was true that there was not a great deal of furniture, and what there was his wealthier colleagues of France and Italy despised, but none of it was irritating. It seemed to suit the cool emptiness that it could not fill. It was old, and Gillian and her father, who knew much more about old furniture than the Italian or French consuls-general or, for that matter, than Eustachio himself, perceived that most of it was extremely good.

Mr. Thesiger let loose his fancy upon it.

"I am sure some Barbary corsairs landed it out of captured galleons," he declared. "How else could it have found its way to Tripoli? That *commode* is Cinque Cento, and so is that — ebony inlaid with exquisitely incised ivory *plaques*. The Metamorphoses of Ovid, you see. A metamorphosis to every little drawer. . . . The Barbary pirates were always at war with Spain, and then with the princely Knights of Malta."

Eustachio was pleased. One likes to find one's shabby possessions are esteemed treasures by *conoscenti*.

"I am afraid," he said, laughing, "that there is not very much to sit upon."

"I would rather sit on that curly sofa than on any

beastly modern settee. What a design! So few lines, and each perfection. Such a piece would look all right in marble. Who would dare to reproduce in marble a 'fashionable' sofa?"

Mr. Thesiger's eulogies were cut short by the arrival of the French consul-general and his wife — the former in a very low collar, the latter in a very high dress.

Monsieur Cannebière — from the Midi — was much more southern-looking and dark than Signore San Malato, who had, in fact, light-brown hair, palish blue eyes, and a rather ruddy fair skin.

Madame Cannebière was also dark, with piles of shiny blue-black hair, shiny black eyes, and a dull olive complexion. She had been the daughter of a Gascon baron, and could never quite get over the loss of her *de* that had befallen her in getting married. She was the doyenne of the consular families, and never, waking or sleeping, forgot it.

"Elle ne manque pas d'aplomb," she told herself at the first sight of Gillian; and young unmarried ladies, she considered, had nothing to do with *aplomb*.

Nevertheless she was intensely gracious, with a graciousness that she believed to be simply ambassadorial. Next to being impertinent, there is nothing like overpowering graciousness. But Gillian was not the girl to succumb to it. She reciprocated all the amiability, tossing it back like a shuttlecock, and remained impervious to the condescension.

M. Cannebière was less august, and a good deal more amiable. He had never been *de*, and there was no pain of loss to embitter him. To be a consul-general, he thought, was very well, and civility was his trade. Miss Thesiger, he saw, was a beautiful girl, and to him she did not appear bumptious. There were no barons in his pedigree, but he was better bred than his wife. Also he liked dining out, for Madame was stingy on private

occasions, and kept a poorish table, and had nothing to talk about except their children and their servants, for he would not listen when she tried to expatiate on the ancestral glories of her family. His own was better off, and rather more well conducted, and Madame's *dot* had been mainly composed of quarterings.

"I wonder who these English are," she said to her husband, "whom we are to meet to-night and after-to-morrow night?"

"They call themselves Tessigère."

"Not *de* Tessigère? The English nobles are Norman. It is only the *nouveaux riches* who are Saxon and what-not."

"Very likely they are not noble — any more than we are."

"Speak for yourself, M. Cannebière. They travel with no attendance. The girl, I learn, has taken a young Arab out of the streets for her lady's-maid."

"No, it is the papa who has taken him for his *valet-de-chambre*. I know of the lad, Bringali; a decent fellow, and honest."

Madame felt rather aggrieved that the strangers should arrive with so little *éclat*. No one whom she really cared to meet ever came to Tripoli. If a British duke and duchess with a suite would come, there would be some point in it. It would not cost her anything, for though such people could not go, like these Tessigères, to the Venezia, San Malato, who was a widower, could put them all up at his consulate.

San Malato had now arrived, and was in a good humour. Like his French colleague, he was fond of dining out, or anywhere, and his disposition was to be friendly.

A Levantine merchant with his wife and her sister came immediately afterwards, and the company was complete. M. Tricoupis was no doubt a Greek, but

Madame and her sister, if not Hebrew, would have been instantly believed had they claimed to be.

"We are of the number of the Muses," said Eustachio.

"But only four Graces," observed Madame Cannebière, who considered that there should be as many ladies at a feast as gentlemen.

Eustachio laughed, and the consuless was glad that she had been so witty.

She went out first with Mr. Thesiger, her husband and Madame Tricoupis followed, then San Malato with that lady's sister, finally Eustachio with Gillian, M. Tricoupis strolling alongside like an equerry or outrider.

At an early opportunity Madame Cannebière started pumping Mr. Thesiger.

"I am much interested," she averred, "in your *noblesse*. My great-grandfather married *en secondes noces* an Irish lady of distinction — Mademoiselle, or as you say, Lady M'Sweeny. Her father was king of a province in that country — Le M'Sweeny."

She did not think it necessary to mention that the royal lady had been *dame de compagnie* to her predecessor. Mr. Thesiger was too polite to inform the consuless that for some little time Ireland has had but one sovereign, who enjoys the inferior honour of being King of England also. As a matter of fact, genealogical matters rather interested him.

But Madame Cannebière wanted to know about his own family.

"You are not Irish?" she inquired. "The natives of that part of England are Catholic, I understand."

"And we are Protestants. No, I am English, though the head of my family is a Scotch earl."

"That is peculiar."

"Yes. All sorts of things are peculiar in English nobility. Many of our oldest families are untitled."

"Ah, that is so in France — the Seigneur de Couci, you know —

'Je suis ni roi ni prince aussi,
Je suis le Seigneur de Couci.'

But the noblesse are always *de*. I was de Vascon."

Mr. Thesiger bore the announcement as well as could be expected.

"Of course one knows the name," he said, bowing, though in fact he had never heard it. "Our Scotch earldom comes through my great-grandmother, who was Countess of Glentilt in her own right. In England only a few of the very oldest titles pass to heirs-general; but all the Scotch peerages conferred before the Union descend to and through females."

Madame Cannebière thought this a sensible custom, for she had no brothers, and would have liked, of all things, to be a baron "in her own right."

"And the actual Comte de Glenteelt is, you were saying, your father. No doubt you are M. le Vicomte de Glenteelt."

"No, madame. If I were Viscount anything, it would be Lochbeg. But my father is not the present head of our family. Lord Glentilt is my first cousin. And I have an elder brother, so that in any case I should not be Lord Lochbeg."

He was getting a little ashamed of so much talk about his own noble relations: Madame thought he was ashamed of being merely a cadet. She thought she would encourage him.

"Monsieur, your cousin, is perhaps an old man," she suggested.

"On the contrary, he is younger than I am," Mr. Thesiger replied, as if his kinsman must be young indeed.

"His wife, Madame la Comtesse, is also Scotch?"

"He is not Scotch, madame, in spite of his Scotch title: and he is unmarried."

Madame Cannebière hardly knew whether to be satisfied or dissatisfied. Her new friend was evidently noble, but the titles all seemed rather remote from him.

It did not trouble Mr. Thesiger much, but one's casual acquaintance often resent these dispositions of fortune more than we do.

Gillian's rings impressed Madame Cannebière as much as they had impressed Eustachio. There is a great difference in rings, and she perceived that these were of the right sort. The stones were large, and they were all diamonds, sapphires, and emeralds; and there was a diamond and emerald pendant that impressed her (and Eustachio) even more. She still was inclined to dislike Miss Thesiger's *aplomb*, but if it were merely family pride it would not be so objectionable. Mr. Thesiger's wife might perhaps have been a duchess "in her own right." But then why was not Miss Thesiger a duchess herself? Possibly she would be when her father was dead — though he seemed healthy, and was barely elderly.

CHAPTER XIII

Mr. Thesiger painted a good deal at Tripoli, and it seemed to Eustachio that he hardly paid due respect to the sun.

"This is Africa," he reminded Gillian, "and the sun is dangerous."

Gillian did not see the danger.

"It is October," she said, "and the mornings and nights are often almost cold."

"Yes; but the morning does not last all day, and when one has got hot a chill does not improve it."

He felt rather disinterested in his care for Mr. Thesiger's health. He certainly had no designs on the life of his prospective father-in-law, but Gillian's parent was undoubtedly in his way. He seldom got her to himself, and Mr. Thesiger's calm assumption that Eustachio could not possibly be a suitor was irritating; it reflected itself on Gillian, who, he began to believe, was no longer indifferent to him. If there had been no Mr. Thesiger he fancied he might have got on more quickly.

Still he urged on them both that an African sun is not to be trifled with.

"To-day it is also *hamsin*," he added, "and Mr. Thesiger takes no notice of it."

"What *is* hamsin?"

"This abominable wind. Can't you feel how it stifles and parches you?"

Gillian only felt as yet that she was rather irritable, and that Eustachio seemed irritable too. Even her father, who was generally far from bad-tempered, had been a little "snappy."

"Do keep your statue away," he had begged of her. "It is impossible to paint with him hovering round, and fussing about the sun."

Eustachio had no objection to keeping away — with Gillian. But the hamsin affected him, as it always does those who are used to it, more than it affected the strangers who were new to it.

"It is at all events dry," declared Gillian, "not like the scirocco in Sicily."

"Dry! Certainly it is dry. All the blood in my body seems dried up. My skin feels too tight for me."

Gillian laughed.

"Well, there's a good deal of you. Perhaps you *have* grown too large for it and want a new one. What a pity you aren't a snake; then you could go under a stone and creep out of it."

"Assuredly I am not a snake."

"That's a good thing, as far as I'm concerned. I do not like them."

From where they were they could see Mr. Thesiger very well, though they were not near enough for him even to hear the sound of their voices, which the hot wind carried away in the other direction, towards the sea.

"He is not finding it easy to paint to-day," Gillian remarked presently. "See how he keeps pushing up his cap, and rubbing his forehead with a whole handful of brushes."

"Of course he cannot paint to-day. Whoever heard of any one being able to paint in a hamsin?"

"Is it the hamsin that makes the air look red?"

Eustachio said "Of course" again, and Gillian declared that a wind with a colour of its own was, at all events, interesting.

Perhaps it was all his talk about the hamsin, but she began to suspect that it really was affecting her dis-

agreeably. She became conscious of a very unusual sensation of nervousness, for in general she knew nothing of nerves. Neither was she superstitious. Yet now there came creeping over her a foreboding, a heavy, uncontrollable feeling of threatening trouble.

Her life had been hitherto somewhat colourless, a monotony of commonplace experiences, with no joys or sorrows standing out in it for landmarks. The years had been pretty much alike; their only variety being the mere variation of place and surrounding. Her mother's death was scarcely even a memory, and she had known neither loves nor hates. Her father and she had all along been good comrades, rarely annoying each other, never quarrelling; but their affection had been of the easy, not profound, sort that was all Mr. Thesiger cared for.

Now she had a dull apprehension that something really bad was about to happen. And with it came the renewed sense of utter friendlessness and homelessness. People should have a home to suffer in. Pain should be secret and unseen. She had not the least idea what it was she dreaded, but if some terrible thing were really about to happen it made it worse to be here. She had liked the change to Africa, not quite with all her father's ingenuous simplicity, but as a new departure. Suddenly she turned against Africa; it seemed as though even Italy or Sicily would be more like home.

"Is anything the matter?" Eustachio asked at last. His voice was low and kind, and she felt that he was really sympathetic.

"Nothing that I know of; but I feel as if there was something. I am not given to vapours and tremors; that makes it more unpleasant. I never felt like it before — as if some horrible thing were coming to meet me."

She was, in fact, trembling. Her pallor was so great

that he could not fail to note it, and her eyes were almost haggard.

"It is this hateful wind," he assured her; "that is all. What seems to you mental is really only physical. It is wretched, but do not let it trouble you."

It is always better when one can assign a reasonable cause for any unpleasant experience that has appeared mysterious.

"It is quite bad enough as it is," he went on, "for you are not well."

He hated illness himself, but he had wit enough to understand that she would rather believe herself to be ill than be left to vague apprehension of some trouble outside herself.

Mr. Thesiger got up and came towards them.

"I suppose it is your hamsin," he grumbled, when they were near enough to hear, "but I can't paint a bit. I shall give up."

"Miss Thesiger is feeling it too," said Eustachio. "She is quite unwell. It is better to go home."

("Home!" thought Gillian, with an irritated recollection of the small and bare but stuffy rooms in the Albergo Venezia.)

Her father glanced at her carelessly.

"Gill is never ill," he observed. "Don't put ideas into her head."

She laughed, cheerlessly enough, and promised she would not be ill to please M. Zante.

"It would not please me much," said Eustachio.

"Well, to flatter your hamsin."

Eustachio was rather savage with Mr. Thesiger; it seemed to him that Gillian's father must be blind. She was altogether unlike herself, and he thought any one ought to be able to see that she was quite ill.

"She has probably got fever," he told himself. "How mad these English are to come out into the

desert, painting in the middle of the day — in a hamsin."

He had seen her trembling, and supposed it to be the shivering of fever. In reality he was wrong about her being ill, and her father was, so far, right; she never was ill, and was not now.

On the way home Eustachio tried not to watch her, and only stole careful glances at her, unobserved, as he believed. But Gillian saw, and was not annoyed. His genuine and unobtruded solicitude pleased her. No one had ever been in the least solicitous about her. She had never experienced the little tender coddlings and anxieties that ordinary girls are surrounded with. Suddenly she felt that she had missed them. Often she had been half amused by the sight of mothers fussing over the insignificant, half-imaginary illnesses of their daughters. Sometimes she had seen a whole family eat its dinner with silent pre-occupation because Caroline had neuralgia and kept her room, or Sylvia was suspected of having contracted a chill.

Now she had a feeling that a little of that sort of sympathy and solicitude must be pleasant if one were out of sorts. She was ashamed of the feeling, and knew that it would pass; but she could not help being conscious that it was there.

In a fashion her father had treated her as if she were a boy, taking for granted in her a boyish robustness, which she had, in fact, justified. Nevertheless she was a girl, and the self-sufficing robustness for the moment failed her. She told herself that what she wanted was to "break down," to be able and free to lean on some one of her own sex and perhaps cry. She could not remember that she had ever cried since she was grown up; she had always scorned tears. But now she had an idea that, just as clouds empty themselves in torrents of rain, and the sky clears and lightens, so would it

be with herself if she too could pour out a deluge of tears. . . . It was all so absurd that she smiled hardly at herself.

"What's the joke, Gill?" demanded her father, seeing the smile. "Cheer us up; we're all in doleful dumps."

The tears nearly came, even in the absence of any sympathetic female bosom to discharge them on.

"If I grinned," she said, "it was not because I had anything funny to let out, but merely to stretch my skin. M. Zante told me that the hamsin made his feel tight; and so does mine. Also, it feels dry a little; can't you hear it crackle?"

"Bother the hamsin," grumbled Mr. Thesiger.

"It's bothering us, I suspect," said Eustachio, more than ever irritated with his elderly friend's obtuseness.

CHAPTER XIV

The night was intolerably hot, and everything was covered with a gritty dust. Eustachio had suggested, before leaving them, that they should shut all their windows, which advice they had both scorned. Certainly no air came in by them, and no coolness. At midnight it felt hotter, more stifling, than at noon.

They had dined at the French consulate, where the dinner, which was Madame's department, had been more elegantly light than sumptuous. The wines, which were M. Cannebière's, had, however, been excellent and abundant.

Eustachio, who sat next her, had insisted on Gillian taking one glass of champagne; and her father, without any one's insisting, had drunk a good many. He felt that he wanted cheering up. In general a very sober man, to-night he was inclined to indulge a little. He hated being depressed, and was determined to shake off the feeling. At the end of dinner his host produced port.

"I know that is your English drink," he declared. "No Englishman has dined till he has had two or three glasses of port."

("Two or three glasses of port — after four or five of champagne — in a hamsin!" thought Eustachio.)

Mr. Thesiger did drink several glasses, and his face became redder as he became more cheerful. Madame Cannebière was not in a good humour; she knew her dinner had been skimped, and she foreboded a scolding from her husband. And what was the good of economy in food if he wasted all that expensive wine? The port

she particularly resented; it is not a French wine, and she felt sure it must be costly. Who were these "Tessigères" that it should be brought out for them?

She disapproved of Gillian entirely, to whom Eustachio had been far too attentive, without the English Miss seeming at all to resent it. Madame considered herself young, and M. Zante had never paid her the least attention.

Gillian's father was not much better. He came into the saloon with a red face, and that redness had been all at her expense.

"All the English drink too much," she reminded herself, not excusing this particular Englishman on that account. A failing may be national, but it is not the less objectionable in a particular instance.

When the Thesigers left, Eustachio also took his leave, and walked with them as far as their hotel, where he said good-night, with many assurances that the wind would change in the morning.

Madame Cannebière thought he ought to have stayed on a little.

"He behaves as if he was one of their family," she told her husband afterwards.

"Perhaps he intends to be. I daresay they will give him some supper; they must all be hungry." Then came the scolding.

"There were only eight quails for nine people," the indignantly hospitable consul complained.

"I never eat them."

"Not unless some one refuses; then you send for the one over."

Meanwhile the Thesigers had let Eustachio go, and were up in their own rooms. Down in the courtyard half-a-dozen Turkish officers had been supping, and

were now playing cards, on tables gritty with desert sand. A little before midnight they went away, and the albergo fell silent. There was soon no noise of any kind; at such an hour the narrow street outside was empty of passengers; had there been any, their footsteps would have made no sound on the unpaved earth. The wind had not changed, but it was a wind one noticed only in its effects, and made not the slightest breathing.

Gillian fell asleep, immeasurably glad to be done with the most hateful day she had ever known. Mr. Thesiger was heavily asleep already; before losing consciousness herself she had heard him snoring, through the thin, ill-fitting door, all warped away from its frame, between their two rooms. She did not know that he had the habit of snoring, and was astonished to perceive how loudly he did it.

She had been asleep an hour or two when she awoke abruptly; she could not tell what had roused her. There was now no noise; but the horrible sense of dread and disaster was waiting for her, and seized her the moment she awoke and sat up in bed. It was like a chill, though the small, close room was stiflingly hot, and she was almost suffocating. Her father was snoring no longer; but she felt an uncontrollable desire for the presence of some one to relieve the sense of ghastly loneliness: and, getting up, went into his room, with a white wrapper flung over her night-clothes. There were no blinds or curtains to the window, and an oil lamp outside lighted the room with its whitewashed walls.

"Anna," her father muttered, "where have you been all this time?"

Was he talking in his sleep? Anna had been her mother's name.

She stood still, just inside the door, but close enough to his bed, the room was so small. She did not want

to wake him, if he were really asleep, by talking. His voice was odd, not like his ordinary waking voice.

"Light a candle," he said, after a minute's pause. And his words came thickly, stammeringly. She went for a candle and brought it back lighted; then she saw at once that something dreadful had really happened, not to herself, in her own person, but to him. His face was all crooked, his mouth distorted. He was not asleep, nor unconscious, but his wits were astray.

"Eustachio's wind, Anna," he stuttered; "it has blown my face about. . . . No, not my teeth; those are not mine over there. Mine are all my own."

She could scarcely bear to look at him. He seemed ever so old, with a silly, cunning smile sideways on his face. He had always been a good-looking man, and now his appearance was unearthly.

She set the candle on the small, bare washing-stand, and knelt beside him, taking hold of one of his twitching hands.

"The wind has made you ill," she said, her words sounding incredibly foolish in her own ears. "There must be doctors here; shall I try to get one?"

"It is in my head; it keeps swelling. When it bursts I shall be better. . . . You said your skin felt tight; it is my skull. The lump inside is too big for it."

A sharp cry of pain cut short his wanderings, and he grasped his forehead with both hands convulsively. She could not bear to leave him, but a doctor must be sought. She stood up, a hot shiver shaking her; and hung over him, dreading to go, and dreading to stay uselessly watching him.

A low tap came at the door. She went to it, and outside found Bringali.

"Signorina, is anything the matter?"

"My father is ill. Is there any doctor?"

"Certo! I will go and fetch one."

Presently there was another knock at the door, and she went to it again. It was Murano.

"Bringali roused me, signorina. He has gone for a doctor. His Excellency is ill?"

"I fear very ill."

She could not bear to let the man in to see her father thus.

The doctor, a young Maltese, came quite soon. He seemed skilful and was very kind, and spoke excellent English. But his face was extremely grave.

"Are you Catholics?" he asked, after he had been there about ten minutes. "Excuse my asking. It is only because — if you are — you should send for a priest."

"No, we are —" "Nothing," she was going to say, but changed it into "not."

"He is very ill?" she asked calmly.

They were standing in her own little room; the thin door between the rooms closed.

"Yes," the young doctor answered frankly. "It is a stroke — a bad one."

Somehow he understood that she was a girl to whom the truth might be told plainly. His manner was grave and very feeling.

"There are other doctors here," he said; "perhaps it would be well to send for another. Indeed, I should prefer it."

He went outside and spoke to Bringali, who sped away silently. Murano and his wife were there, eager to be of use, and full of sympathy.

They went back to the sick man, who was again asleep, or unconscious, and breathing stertorously, in noisy gasps.

The young doctor had done all sorts of things and administered remedies; but he had not much hope, and did not pretend to have.

CHAPTER XV

In the late afternoon of the day following Mr. Thesiger died. Two hours earlier he had become conscious and sensible, and knew at once that he was dying.

"It is the worst trick I have ever played you, Gill," he said. "As the servants say when they break things, 'it is quite an accident.'"

He had his teeth in now, but they did not much improve his appearance. Still, he seemed glad to be thus equipped.

"Had I foreseen this I would have married Lady Wilbury," he protested. "You would have had a home; and she is not a bad-hearted creature."

Gillian knew that the idea of Lady Wilbury's readiness to accept him as a husband had been all her own; a sad little smile crossed her mind rather than her face.

"I often thought of making a good marriage for your sake," he went on, "but there never seemed any hurry. And we were so comfortable as we were. Gill, what did the doctor say about a priest? I heard him through the door."

"He asked if we were Catholics."

"Well, I should like a priest. I have always been fond of the Church. Would you mind going for one?"

"I do not like leaving you. . . ."

"Oh, that will be all right. Bringali is a Mahometan, and they would not pay much attention to him. Do you go. It is close to."

"Bringali," she said, outside, "take me to the Catholic church; is it near?"

"Five minutes, signorina."

And they set off.

The church was really quite near; a thin-looking mud building that the poor friars had made with their own hands. The monastery adjoined it — poor too, and clean and new, with a staring air of cheapness.

They were not kept waiting five minutes: the Prefect Apostolic himself came down immediately — the very friar that had been saying his rosary that first afternoon at the other convent outside the walls.

Gillian told her tale in a few words.

"There is no time to lose," she said. "It is his idea: and if you will help you must come quickly."

The priest, who was almost young, came at once, running upstairs first for the holy oils, and into the church for the Blessed Sacrament.

"How good God is," he said to himself.

They went back together in silence, the friar clasping one hand upon his breast. Bringali walked in front, and when some one got in their way pushed him aside.

"Make room," he said with authority; "it is a holy man, a saint."

Gillian was surprised, but said nothing: neither did the friar, whether surprised or no. She took him upstairs to her father's room, and went into her own: finding she could hear what they said, she went out on the corridor, and stood leaning against the window that looked down into the courtyard. The old Arab who had waited on them at meals was cleaning potatoes; two officers were playing cards. Bringali was sitting on the stone stairs, and went a few steps lower, out of sight, when she appeared.

"My father is dying," she said to herself, trying to believe it. It seemed quite impossible: the idea of death was altogether strange to her. It had always seemed natural to think of her mother as dead, and a mere matter of course to think of her father as alive. She now

supposed that he would die quite soon, in an hour or two; and yet she could not realise it at all. Where would he be to-night at bedtime, for instance? How could he be going anywhere without her? He did not appear to mind dying, except for her sake, and that also was puzzling, and made it seem more unreal. He had always been engrossed in the little affairs of living — how could he suddenly stop, as if there were no object in going on? He had given up living at the first hint, so to speak, as one might give up some pursuit that had abruptly become impossible — as a man whose legs had been cut off would give up walking, only with much less fuss about it.

The priest stayed with him about an hour, during which time he got through a great deal, instructing him, hearing his confession, baptizing him conditionally, absolving him, and then immediately giving him Holy Communion and Extreme Unction.

When the friar came out his face shone.

"God is wonderful," he said to himself. Perhaps he was wondering what Mr. Thesiger had ever done to merit such singular grace.

Then his eyes fell on Gillian, and their light softened into pity. Still, he could scarcely think of anything but the wonderful deathbed conversion triumphantly accomplished.

"He was thoroughly conscious throughout," he said in a low, almost exulting voice.

"Is he conscious still?"

"I think he is falling asleep. . . ."

Gillian began to move away towards the door of her father's room. Her manner may have seemed proud and cold; she was not thinking much of the priest, and was preoccupied.

"You are not yourself a Catholic, then?" the Prefect Apostolic asked. He had expected her to seem pleased

and relieved. She would have no anxiety now as to the change that death would bring to her father.

"No: my mother was of the Greek Church, and I have never been anything."

She said it quite simply, almost absent-mindedly. In truth she was not thinking of religion or religions, at all. The friar thought her chilly, and concluded that, as she did not seem glad of her father's conversion, she was perhaps annoyed by it. Perhaps she was, as her words hinted, an atheist.

He was almost too much occupied himself in thanking God for so peculiar and surprising a conversion to have room in his mind for the thought of her loneliness and trouble. He was a most sweet-hearted, kindly man, but the supernatural was everything to him; and that Mr. Thesiger should now die seemed to him something splendid. He quite perceived that the dying man had never had any religion — that was what made his genuine and free conversion now so marvellous. The friar knew that deathbed conversions are in real life rare to a miracle.

And then this English lady seemed so unapproachable; her air was courteous, even in her preoccupation, but it was aloof and difficult. Ordinary sympathy was not easy to offer her. And perhaps she was an atheist.

At the door of her father's room she turned and held out her hand, with a cold smile — a smile that was cold because her heart had no smile in it — and said:

"I thank you sincerely, my father, for all that you have done. He wanted it, and there was so little time."

"Niente, signorina. It is what I am for: and it has been a great happiness — a great privilege."

She felt perfectly how sincere, how good, the priest was; but she was not thinking of him. She wanted to be alone, for the little time left, with her father. She fancied she had many things to say to him. It did not

seem that she had ever shown him much affection — they had taken all that sort of thing for granted. She wanted very much to tell him how fond she really was of him. So the priest turned away, and she went into her father's room.

The Arab school over the way was not yet dismissed, and she could hear the children's monotonous sing-song. She saw at once that her father was dead: he must have died while she was making civil speeches to the friar outside.

CHAPTER XVI

When Eustachio came to see her, there was no place to receive him in, except her own room and the corridor outside it. They stood together in the narrow passage and spoke in low tones; trying not to hear the noise of nailing that came from the room where the dead man was being shut into his coffin; but in truth neither of them could hear anything else.

It seemed to Eustachio terrible that she should be there. But where could she go? Madame Cannebière had not asked her to go to the French consulate, nor would Gillian have gone if she had been invited.

"I am ashamed to say it," he said at last, when he found it impossible to talk of anything else. "But you know what I wish. Will you consent?"

She knew what he meant, and made no pretence of misunderstanding. But she could not answer at once.

"It is no time to ask such a thing, I know," he went on. "In other circumstances I would not ask it now."

Had any girl ever received an offer of marriage before outside the room where her dead father's coffin was being closed down?

He did not ask her if she loved him: he made no protestations of loving her. He must be a suitor, but to be a wooer was then impossible; she quite understood. Nevertheless, she did not answer yet; because she could not.

She leant against the window-frame and looked down into the *cortile:* it was nearly dark, and the old Arab waiter was putting a lighted lamp on the table where the Turkish officers were presently coming to dine: as

soon as he set it down a big moth blundered up against the hot chimney and fell down inside the globe. Yussuf was annoyed and muttered something. For some reason the fatality of the moth made Gillian think of Scylla and Charybdis and the boat with the lateen sail that had gone bearing down on them, that morning when Eustachio had first spoken to her. She wondered whether the boat had chosen the rock or the whirlpool . . . and yet she was not really thinking of the boat, or of the whirlpool, or of the rock, but of that stealthy hammering noise from her father's room.

One of the officers came clanking into the courtyard, and unbuckled his sword-belt, dropping it with a clink on a bench. Then he lighted a cigarette, and asked Yussuf in a low voice how the English gentleman was. When the Arab said, "Dead," the young Turk threw his cigarette away. Of course he would soon light another, but it was meant as a little sign of mourning and respect.

An Arab musician appeared, and offered to play while the officers were dining, but the Turkish officer shook his head and sent him away. Some one out of sight in the kitchen, which opened widely on the courtyard, dropped a piece of crockery, and it broke. Signora Murano said only, "Hsh!" but did not scold the delinquent. That was her tribute of mourning.

All this time Eustachio stood still, in silence, close beside Gillian in the shadow. He wondered what she would say. If she did not marry him now, he supposed she would go away at once — how could she stop here alone? On the day after to-morrow (Sunday) there would be a Florio-boat going to Malta; perhaps she would go away in it, in which case he would probably never see her again.

At last she spoke, without even turning to him.

"You are sure you want to marry me?" she said simply.

"Quite sure."

She sighed, and said immediately —

"Very well."

She did not even give him her hand, and just then Bringali came up the stone stairs to say that the Prefect Apostolic was below, asking if he might speak to her. He had come to arrange about the funeral.

"There is no one in the dining-room. Shall I put him there?" Bringali asked when she had said that she would see the priest.

"Am I to go away?" Eustachio inquired. "Can I do anything for you? You would not like me to see the priest, and arrange everything for you?"

"I will see him first. Then you can arrange anything. . . ."

She went into the hot, bare, glaring little room, and waited till Bringali came back with the friar. One of the lamps was flaming, and there was a smell of lamp-smoke. The portraits of the sovereigns reminded her of her father's compassion for the originals.

"Poor things," he used to say; "they are defenceless against people who choose to issue portraits of them."

She wondered where her father was. No doubt the Prefect Apostolic supposed that he knew. Did he miss her? Was he worried about her?

The priest did not find her any easier to get on with now than at their last meeting. He could not see that she had been weeping; her dark, red-brown eyes were steady and still, as aloof in their cold expression as ever. She looked very dignified and quite calm; he was sure she was a noble, and thought she seemed grand; he was himself a fisherman's son from the Adriatic coast, and had had scarcely anything to do

with nobles. He almost wished she would scream and make a fuss like a peasant, then he could have tried to console her.

She stood, upright and tall, in the middle of the room, not leaning against anything, and he saw the rich gems on her slim white fingers, that had never done any work like his own thick brown hands.

She was again very courteous, and listened patiently while he told her what he proposed for the funeral, her eyes never dropping.

"Only let it be quite simple," she said. "My father always hated any fuss."

Perhaps the friar thought she had no heart.

"She is like a rich lamp that has never been lighted," he told himself. "That is because she has never had faith."

Finally, she told him that, for the rest, M. Zante, the Greek vice-consul, would arrange with him.

"We are to be married," she said plainly, "and he will act as my father's son."

The priest remembered that she had told him before that her mother had been of the Greek faith. Now, if she married a Greek, she would probably join that schismatical Church herself. Perhaps that was why she had seemed so cold about her father's conversion.

She held out her hand, and the Prefect Apostolic touched it with his own awkwardly, for he was not used to shake hands with ladies. Then she left him, and sent Eustachio to him.

"May I presently bring something to your room for you to eat, signorina?" Bringali asked her meekly. He was longing to do something useful, and could not tell what to do.

"Signor Murano begged me to persuade you," he said.

"I am not hungry," she answered, though Bringali knew she had eaten nothing all day.

He looked so miserable, and so kind, that she told him he might do what he liked.

"Bringali," she added, "I am going to marry M. Zante."

The young Arab was not surprised; he was not pleased either, for he did not like the Greek consul: but he supposed it had all been arranged while Mr. Thesiger was alive, and, now that he was dead, it was natural that the signorina should go to some home somewhere.

"I hope her Excellency will be happy," he said humbly.

"Happy? I was not thinking of that."

What was she thinking of? She did not know herself. She did not know if she was in love. She was altogether ignorant about love.

She knew that she admired Eustachio, and that she was utterly alone, homeless and friendless: and he had offered her a home, and affection. She was terribly tired, and sick to death of aimless travelling. Self-sufficing as she had seemed to the Prefect Apostolic she was in reality terrified of her loneliness and exile, for surely the most utter exile must be to have no home anywhere. She had never had a friend, except her father; and she did not know any of her relations: knowing scarcely, indeed, their names.

Then she really thought Eustachio wished to marry her. She had guessed it long ago. It did not seem to her reasonable to refuse, or hesitate, seeing that she was as glad to marry him as she felt capable just then of being glad of anything.

Above all she wanted to have a home, to have some resting-place, and some one whom it would be a duty

as well as a comfort to love and be loved by. Nevertheless she was thinking, as she tried to eat the food Signor Murano sent her, and, later on, when she lay down and tried to go to sleep, not much of Eustachio, not much of herself, but mostly of her father.

CHAPTER XVII

When Eustachio left Gillian to go home he was busy enough with thoughts of her, and of himself. He felt, in a fashion, exultant, for he had made up his mind weeks ago that he would like to marry her, but had never thought it would be easy. He did not flatter himself that she was exactly in love with him, though it was easy to see that she had a strong liking for him. He must have been aware of his singular beauty, but he was not vain of it, or in the habit of thinking about it: and he had not ascribed the girl's attraction towards him to admiration of it. That Mr. Thesiger would approve of him as a son-in-law, he had not at all imagined to be likely: and now that difficulty was gone, unexpectedly and suddenly, and Gillian had accepted him with scarcely a moment's hesitation.

Perhaps he began to care less for success now that it had proved so simple and so easy. Was he himself in love? He knew, in fact, as little about love as Gillian, but for a different reason: in her case it was mere lack of experience, in his, sheer lack of capacity. He may have fancied himself in love now, as he had before and would again.

On the day following, Mr. Thesiger was buried; first there was a very simple Mass of requiem and then the body was laid to its rest in the little sandy Catholic cemetery. Then Gillian went back to the dreary emptiness of the Albergo Venezia, at the door of which Eustachio left her.

"She has not much heart," he told himself as he walked away; "not one tear, not one sob."

"Now I can," said Gillian, up in her lonely room; and the tears and sobs came.

Bringali crept up the stairs noiselessly, and crouched by the door outside. For the first time in his life he wished he were a woman, that he might have gone in and tried to comfort her.

Eustachio walked home; as he passed the British consulate a large piece of newspaper blew across the narrow street: and he stooped to pick it up idly. A short paragraph was headed "Death of Lord Glentilt," and he read it. It stated that James Thesiger, seventh Earl of Glentilt, extra Aide-de-camp to the Viceroy of India, had been killed while playing polo, on September 30th, in the thirty-second year of his age, and, dying unmarried, was succeeded by his cousin, Mr. Edward Thesiger.

Eustachio felt himself flush. It seemed as if everything was working to serve his interests. He paused a moment, and wondered if he had better go back to tell Gillian. If her father had succeeded his cousin, must she not already be Countess of Glentilt in her own right? But he walked on and did not go to her, for two different reasons: if she had become a countess would she marry him? and then, cold as he had called her to himself, he did not feel that news of this sort could be told her at that moment.

When they did meet he told her.

"Edward Thesiger is my father's brother," she said, without much show of interest. Neither was she interested very particularly; she had never known any of these people, and all she remembered having heard about her uncle was that he had made an unfortunate marriage and lived apart from his wife.

Eustachio was disappointed. For a good many hours he had been congratulating himself on his peculiar luck, and now it had all been explained away.

"If you had not resolved to marry me, I suppose," he said, smiling, "you would have gone to live with these people."

"Oh no. They are strangers to me. Papa disapproved of the present Lady Glentilt, and said so; and he and his brother quarrelled about it."

"So Lord Glentilt is married. And you never knew his children."

"There was only one — a boy; no, I never knew him." That boy was dead, and Gillian had heard it no doubt, but she was thinking of quite other matters now, and did not mention it.

Eustachio told her of the arrangements for their marriage — in the small Greek chapel, by the Poppos, who was a sort of chaplain to the Greek vice-consulate.

His idea was that it should be at once, and Gillian consented. What had they to wait for? Her consent was easy enough to understand: her position, as a girl of scarcely twenty years of age, alone in a small hotel in Barbary, was peculiar and awkward; she had no friends to consult, and no friends to support her. If she was to be married, it was plainly best to marry forthwith. She had not even any money; when the expenses of her father's brief illness and of his funeral were paid, and their bill at the hotel, she would have scarcely any left.

This she told Eustachio.

"You are marrying a pauper," she said, with a dismal little smile.

He smiled too, radiantly. But he was taken aback, for he had imagined the Thesigers to be well-off.

"I am not exactly rich either," he said.

"I am glad of that, for we shall be in the same boat."

At the same time the brave barque *Poverty* was not one in which his Hellenic Majesty's vice-consul much cared to sail.

Nevertheless they were married; and the Greek Poppos, who struck Gillian as a disagreeable-looking person, married them. He was undeniably dirty, with dingy skin, and dingy hair dragged into a sort of frowsy pig-tail under his queer hat. It was not his fault that he squinted, but Gillian had a silly distrust of people with a squint; and she liked a man to look like a man, whereas the priest looked like a grubby old woman. He had none of the happy air of frankness that she had noticed in the Prefect Apostolic; and his manner was servile and cringing to Eustachio.

The chapel was small and tawdry, and had a stale smell, which was natural, as none of its little windows opened, and the Levantine congregation frequenting it were not addicted to bathing themselves. The ikonastasis was of painted wood, of a bilious pale drab, with a few terrible paintings of Greek saints, in ghastly frames, adorning it. The priest was perhaps a saint also, for their holinesses had slanty eyes like his, and much the same obliquity of expression.

Eustachio, however, was not at all suggestive of anything in the Greek Church; he was of a type that went back to days when Greece knew nothing of Christianity.

The wife of the Poppos, clad in brown, looked on, and a sacristan, not perceptibly dirtier than the priest, and his son, witnessed the marriage; and then all was over.

CHAPTER XVIII

No lady called upon Gillian after her marriage: there were only the consular ladies, Eustachio reminded her, and he informed her it was not their etiquette to exchange visits with those who were in such deep mourning. The British consul-general and his family were still on leave, and Gillian could easily believe that Madame Cannebière would not greatly regret a fair pretext for staying away.

To no one did the Greek vice-consul announce his marriage, though he happened to meet his French colleague's wife within a few days of it.

"That poor M. Tessigère," she said; "his death was very sudden! You have seen mademoiselle since?"

"Oh, yes; I attended her to her father's funeral," the young man answered.

"And mademoiselle? She has not gone away?"

"Not yet. No."

Again he had permitted the Frenchwoman to speak of Mr. Thesiger's daughter as "Miss" without correcting her.

"It is as I thought," Madame Cannebière assured her husband that evening after dinner.

"Nonsense! They were married the day after the funeral in his consulate chapel. What an affection you have for scandals and mysteries!"

"Affection, no! But instinct, yes!"

"You will not call upon her?"

"I? When he has not even told us he is married?"

M. Cannebière shrugged his shoulders: it certainly was difficult to visit a lady whose presence was not al-

luded to. He himself had occasion to go to the Greek consulate a day or two after, but he went to the chancery without entering Eustachio's private residence.

"Mon cher," he explained, "I have a letter from a French merchant at Constantine whose father was married here to a Greek subject: he wants a copy of the certificate. Does your registry go back so far? — about 1848 the date, I think."

He referred to the letter, and laid it open on the table. "Yes — March 1848 my correspondent says."

"Certainly the register goes as far back: our consulate here was in existence long before that; and there have been a good many marriages, still the book is not full."

The vice-consul fetched it from a drawer which he unlocked, and turned back many pages till he came to the right one: there the marriage was — Paul Marie Barège to Alexia Tricoupis, March 18, 1848.

"Merci, bien! Mais, dérangez pas — I will copy it if you will let me."

Eustachio, however, said it would be more regular if he copied and attested the certificate himself. He put the book down upon a pile of papers and began making the duplicate.

There was a knock at the door, and it opened immediately: the Frenchman's back was to it, and he did not see Gillian, who did not enter. Eustachio started up and went out to her, closing the door behind him.

"What is it?" he asked. "Do you want me?"

"It is not of much importance: I did not know you were busy. Only come when M. Cannebière is gone."

"Yes — I will immediately."

He went back into the chancery and found his colleague standing exactly as he had left him. Nevertheless the Frenchman had had time to turn to the last written page of the register, and found the entry of no

marriage later than the month of August. Eustachio's own marriage was certainly not registered yet.

M. Cannebière shrugged his shoulders again; but he looked sincerely annoyed.

"Céleste is right again," he said to himself; "she often is, and never ought to be: she arrives at her conclusions almost always without data."

Eustachio came back and finished making the extract.

"Will you dine with us on Thursday?" inquired the Frenchman. "Madame charged me to ask you."

"I shall be delighted. But no — I cannot. I am going to Jerba on that very day. You will ask me again when I return."

"Yes, yes."

But if Cannebière had made no allusion to any one but Zante himself, the Greek had made none to his being no longer alone.

Though Madame Cannebière would have been justly elated at all this confirmation of her suspicions, her husband told her none of it. He was a discreet man, and no harm could come of his holding his tongue.

Eustachio did not go to Jerba that week, though he really had to go some time. It was, in fact, nearly a month later that he went. On this particular occasion Gillian accompanied him; but when next he made an official excursion he left her at Tripoli.

Eustachio had not boasted of his garden without reason: it was wonderfully large, seeing that the consulate was in the town; and wonderfully beautiful, considering the flat, unbroken nature of the ground. It ran back to the high walls left by the Knights of Malta, that protected much of it from sun, and more of it from wind and sand. The trees were old and as well-grown as any at Tripoli could be expected to be, and the level of the site was varied by pergolas, balustrades, and

high well-heads. It was, in fact, rather an Italian garden than a Moorish, the place having been laid out ages ago, during the brief reign of the Christian knights.

Gillian seldom stirred out of it, and her husband did not urge her to do so. At first her state of deep mourning made it seem natural, and later on he thought it convenient and desirable.

Of course he knew that all of the few Europeans in Tripoli must be aware of her presence in his house, nor would he have denied it if forced to speak; but he did not intend to be forced to speak. He had no determined plan then, but wished to be guided by circumstances: to keep a free hand. Meanwhile he made such inquiries as he could by letter. From Gillian herself he learned very early indeed that she was now almost penniless. Her father's small fixed income had died with him, and her own income, inherited from her mother, was scarcely enough to provide her with dress.

"I wonder," she said one day, "how Bringali is."

"Quite well, of course. Those sort of fellows are always quite well."

"Till they die?"

"Oh yes. They die at last, though no one hears that they do. Meanwhile they have nothing the matter with them. Would you like to see him?"

"Yes, I think I should. Father was fond of him."

Eustachio knew, as it happened, that Bringali had gone to Constantinople with a Turkish officer, and would perhaps stop there.

"I will send for him," he said kindly.

Gillian was grateful, for she knew her husband rather disliked the young Arab.

In many ways Eustachio showed sympathy. He often led her to talk of her father.

"It is better," he said gently, "not to shut one's sorrow down too close. Speaking of our losses does

not enhance them, but softens them. Of course I will not make you talk of him if you feel it too soon."

"No," she answered, "I think you are right. To tell the truth my grief almost surprises me: I had not realised how much he was to me."

"You were always together — and always alone?"

"Since my mother's death."

"You do not remember her?"

"Barely. She was Russian, you know."

"Can you remember Russia?"

"They were not married in Russia: I was never there. She was an art student in Vienna, and it was there my father married her."

Eustachio asked other questions, but without any air of curiosity: simply as though to keep her talking. He led her to speak, as far as she could speak, of her father's family, and the relations she had never seen.

She was very vague in her answers, knowing so little about it. Nor was she always correct in the little she did say. For instance, her parents had not been married in Vienna, but in Buda-Pest, where they were spending an autumn holiday — Anna Berisov having gone thither with her brother, also an artist, long since dead, and Mr. Thesiger having followed them. That the couple had not been married in the British Embassy at Vienna Eustachio discovered, for he wrote there for particulars, and was told that no such marriage had there taken place.

He immediately decided that Mr. Thesiger was as unprincipled as himself: perhaps this discovery, as he thought it, accounted for the Englishman's wandering life (as it was itself accounted for by it), and for Gillian's vagueness about both her father's and her mother's family.

Nevertheless he never became unkind to her. He told himself that he had been duped — or rather that he

might have been. But he never accused Gillian of duping him, or punished her for doing so by roughness or accusation.

Without possessing any heart he was not by nature cruel — not, at all events, with the sort of insane cruelty that takes pleasure in witnessing suffering. On the contrary, if he had occasion to behave heartlessly he would rather be out of the way of seeing its effects.

At the moment of asking Gillian to be his wife, which was the only way he could offer her his protection, he had felt sorry for her loneliness and abandonment, and almost annoyed with her father for dying so unexpectedly in such a place as Tripoli. Nevertheless he had realised that her father's death made it possible for him to marry her, which he did not believe would have been easy if Mr. Thesiger had gone on living. He then still believed that the lonely girl was wealthy, and thought it likely that she would be more than wealthy. Her father's death had, he almost felt sure, opened the way for her own accession to the family honours and estates. His offer of marriage was half an impulse of what he would have called love, half an impulse of a sort of good-nature. The plotting which was involved in it was partly stupid and partly crafty, as in most cases scheming is. It is only in the hands of rarely gifted persons that plots are really clever — a chill faculty of calculation may be uninspired by genius.

CHAPTER XIX

Gillian was too clever herself to remain long ignorant that her husband was not remarkable for talents. He kept all his shop wares in the window, and she soon learned that there was not much store behind. Probably she had never counted on his being particularly clever. He talked easily, and for the most part pleasantly, and was interesting almost without knowing it when he told her of places and peoples she had never known. For the rest, he was good-tempered, well-mannered, and amiable without effort after amiability. His love for her, such as it had been, did not last many months, but he liked her, and was neither cross nor cold.

She had been too much pre-occupied at the moment of her marriage to ask herself what she expected of marriage; and in any case she might have expected less than some girls, whose dreams are full of romance and the demand for perfection. She knew that she had been very fond of her father, and he of her, and she was aware that he was not at all perfect. With Eustachio she might fairly look for as much happiness as her father had given her, perhaps for more, since she and he had youth in common, and whatever hope youth carries in his hand.

Eustachio perceived that his wife was neither unhappy nor discontented, found no fault with him, and accepted their life of rather odd seclusion without trouble, apparently without advertence: and, as this pleased him, his kindness to her remained easy.

By this time he felt sure that she had no rights of succession to anything that might have become her

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father's: that Mr. Thesiger and her mother had not been married was, he supposed, the real reason why Gillian did not inherit her father's small, fixed income. Legally speaking she was, he concluded, her mother's child only.

He made no attempt, or scarcely any, to ascertain whether she herself was aware of this. She told him her parents had been married at Vienna, and this he now knew was not true: but she had very probably been so informed by her father, and he did not decide that she had meant to deceive him. It did not seem to him to matter much; nor would he have thought the worse of her for trying to deceive him in such a matter; only he did not mean to be deceived. Neither did his discovery, as he thought it, of her nameless birth make him rude or unkind to her: even he had sense and instinct enough to know that she was a lady, socially much his own superior. What was most annoying to him was her lack of money. He adored money himself, and had an insatiable appetite for it.

Thus affairs stood when, several months after their marriage, he had occasion to go to Benghasi, and this time he did not take his wife with him. He assured her that there was no tolerable hotel in the place, and that he would not think of exposing her to inevitable discomfort. There was, he said, nothing to see: Benghasi was not interesting, and it was considered the reverse of healthy. Gillian was not well at the time, and was content to do as he evidently wished, and stay where she was.

They parted with cheerful friendliness, and Gillian missed him: would perhaps have missed him more but that a large box of books had just arrived from Europe: she had always been devoted to reading, and for some time had had almost nothing to read.

At first Eustachio had spoken of being away three weeks, but when her remaining at Tripoli was a settled thing, he seemed to think his absence might last "about a month." When the month was up and he was still away, without talking of an immediate return, she was ready to admit that "about a month" might mean five or six weeks.

One evening, four or five weeks after her husband's departure, a servant came to her in the garden and said that a young Arab asked permission to see her.

"His name is Bringali, and he says that he was in the service of your Excellency's father."

"Yes. Let him come out here. I remember him very well."

Presently Bringali came, and Gillian was almost surprised to find how glad she was to see him.

In appearance he was improved: he had always been clean, and had always held himself well; but his clothes were better, and he had a prosperous, independent air.

He had plenty to tell her: for he had been to Mecca and had seen Constantinople, which he was undevout enough to prefer to the sacred city.

His manners had always been good, and he had not now the slightest appearance of inquisitiveness. Nevertheless he would have liked to ask her many questions.

"And who is your master now? You went away with a Turkish officer, my husband told me."

"Yes. And he has come back here. I am with him still. He came back because the governor is his uncle and asked for him; otherwise we should have preferred Istambul. He is a good master, and well off, but ignorant — like all the Turks."

Gillian laughed: Bringali had such a cool way of stating facts that they hardly sounded impertinent.

"You never drive out beyond the oasis now?" he

asked. They talked in Italian, and of course he really said "she."

"I never go out at all, except here into the garden."

"There is nothing to see. It is not like Istambul. You could drive there for a year and see something new every day."

He did not betray the slightest sense of finding anything odd in her seclusion, which could not have been greater if her husband had been a Turk.

"The other ladies come and see you here," he added carelessly; "that is better. It is not fit you should run after them."

"The consulate ladies? None of them come."

"No loss. They are not for you — except, perhaps, the English consul's wife."

"And she is away."

"No. They came back long ago."

Bringali spoke quite coolly, and looked about the garden as if the subject was unimportant. Nevertheless, he was watching Gillian closely. She was, in fact, rather surprised. The English consul's wife must know by this time that her husband's Greek colleague had married an English wife.

"May I come and see you again? I wish I could be your servant still. If I can be of use at any time it would make me proud."

"You look proud enough already, Bringali," said Gillian, laughing. "But it is very nice of you to say you would like to be my servant."

"Will you please keep this card? It has my address. If you want me and do not care to send for me, you might write."

She took the card, and thanked him again.

"Have you seen the priest who came when my father was dying?" she asked. "He has not been to see me.

I thought, perhaps, he would come. I sent him some money to have the grave made nice."

"He told me. Yes, I saw him. He is a holy man, but very modest — that is his fault. It is unusual in holy persons — usually they are proud. He did not come because your Excellency did not tell him to come, and I expect he was afraid to seem interfering."

"Interfering!"

"Yes. Among the Nizrani there are great divisions and jealousies: just as with us. And he knew your Excellency was of the Greek faith."

"But I am not."

"No? He was mistaken then. He thought your marriage was done here, in the Greek chapel, only he does not hear much; he listens only to the angels who never tell the news. Of course your Excellency was married in the French consulate also — being a Catholic."

"But I am not a Catholic. I am of the English Church — it was only when he was dying my father became a Catholic."

"My mistake this time. Of course the other marriage was in the English consulate."

Bringali was again looking about him.

"It is a fine garden!" he observed calmly.

"I have never been inside the English consulate," she said. "There was only the marriage here."

"You must forgive my stupidity: I am ignorant of foreign customs."

But Bringali was not at all ignorant. He was quite aware that foreigners of different nationality were married in the national consulate of each party. He had been back in Tripoli several weeks, and had made many cautious inquiries about Gillian, and had heard some things which made him curious.

His master had a brother, too, at Benghasi in the custom-house, and both brothers were gossips. The Benghasi official had been lately on a visit to his uncle the governor, and had news to tell of the Greek consul and his doings.

When Bringali went away, Gillian kept the card he had given her, though she did not foresee much occasion of standing in need of any services he could render her.

CHAPTER XX

A FEW days after Bringali's visit Gillian heard from her husband again. He had written fairly often, and she did not expect any news from him more important than the announcement of his return. She was again in the garden when the letter was brought to her, and she at once shut her book and began reading what Eustachio might have to say. She hoped he was coming home soon; she was not well, and was feeling rather lonely. The book she was reading was the last of the new supply, and when it should be finished there would be more occasion for finding herself *désœuvrée*.

"Dear Gillian," wrote Eustachio, "this letter will be hard for you to read, as it is for me to write. I do not even know if I ought to begin as I have begun. Perhaps I have no right to call you anything more than 'Dear Miss Thesiger.'"

She read so far, and turned deeply scarlet, and then deathly white. She could not even hold the letter, but laid it with trembling hand upon the stone table by her side. There was no sound in the garden but the rattle of the water-wheel, for the old Arab gardener was at work filling the conduit-pipes that irrigated the whole place.

"You were ignorant," wrote her husband, "of forms and regulations — which was natural. So was I — which was inexcusable. All the marriages in our con-

sulate-chapel that I had known of were between Greek and Greek, and the one marriage was sufficient. But you are not Greek, and I have learned that in our case the marriage should have been performed in your English consulate, before your consul, or his representative, as well as in the Hellenic consulate. Indeed I believe this should have been done, even though I had married a lady of my own nation; for though of Greek family, I count as an English subject, my father having been born in Malta, and his in the Ionian islands, during the British rule. Even of the marriage in the chapel of my consulate there remains no proof, for it was never registered in the consulate registry. Three following marriages have been inserted there since, by my assistant-consul, since my coming here; as it happened, none occurred after our own until I left Tripoli. How I came to forget to register ours I cannot say; but you know how indolent I am, and if I remembered at all that I had not made the entry it was always when I was away from the chancery. Legally speaking, we are unmarried — both of us free. And I will not ask you to bind yourself to me. Life is long — without love, endless; and I am not too stupid to know that you never loved me. You accepted me half-dazed with sorrow and trouble; to accept was easy, to refuse difficult; and you had no alternative. It was wrong of me to ask you; I felt it even then, and have felt it more and more ever since. It was taking an unfair advantage of your helpless state. It was meant good-naturedly, but was in fact utterly wrong and unjust. I neither knew you nor myself. I had admired you for weeks, more than I had then admired any woman, and I fancied that was love, which was really no more than æsthetic appreciation. Even then I could not persuade myself that you loved me; but I told myself I could teach you. But you could not learn; nor in truth was I fit to

teach, knowing no real love myself. You never were happy with me; your thoughts were not mine — they were all memories of your father, in which I had no share. When I really knew this I knew also that happiness was impossible for me. I wanted *you*, and got only the tips of your fingers. Our marriage was neither legal nor real. There may be real marriages which are not legal; just as there are millions of legal marriages which are not real. Ours was neither.

"Had our union been originally legal, its dissolution would have been our best hope of happiness; by a happy accident it requires no dissolution, having never had any legal value.

"We have been absent from each other now nearly two months; in that perspective one can see the truth. Failing to teach you to love me — to be in highest truth my wife — I have failed to learn to love you, to be in highest truth your husband.

"I *know* now what love is — for the first time. And being free, I will give it where it is returned. Before you get this I shall have married. To Tripoli I do not return. I am resigning my consular office, and in a few days' time shall be upon the sea, on my way to a new life in a new world.

"Upon the top of the tall bookcase in the salon you know there is a bust of Athene. Under it you will find a small key; it unlocks the drawers in my writing-table. In the lowest you will find, beneath some papers, two thousand francs in French notes. Take them, and they will suffice to carry you home to your own country, among your own people. . . ."

That was not the end of the letter; there was a good deal more of it, but that was all Gillian could bring herself to read at first, and probably more than all the reader can bear to see quoted. Ultimately Gillian got

motionless as a Madonna in a pietà, a servant came out and told her that her midday-meal was ready.

"I shall not come in. I do not want any. Send to the address on this card, and tell the man to come here."

She gave the card Bringali had given her to the servant, and watched him go back into the house; she did not even take up her book and pretend to read. The man was an Arab, and knew Bringali, and he liked the Greek consul's wife, though he did not admire the Greek consul. He went on her errand immediately, without telling any one where he was going.

In less than half-an-hour Bringali came. She was still sitting in exactly the same position by the old carved stone table, on an old carved stone seat; the noontide sun was pitiless out beyond the shade; everything was staringly clear and hard; but under the olive trees it seemed almost gloomily dark.

For the first time since he had known her Bringali observed how very proud she looked. It struck him, being a new sensation, much more than her extreme and peculiar beauty. Always pale, her face and hands looked now as white and cold as marble. Her hair in the deep shadow hardly showed any of its strange red colouring, but looked very dark, as did her eyebrows and her large scornful eyes.

"I came at once," said Bringali. "Have I done anything which has displeased you? You look angry."

"Angry!"

"Yes. I was afraid some one might have been telling lies of me. No one could tell you anything true to make you angry with me."

"I sent for you because you are the only friend I can call mine in all the world."

She spoke in a plain, even voice that made her words seem much more terrible to Bringali. It was he, not

to the end of it, and even to know it almost by heart; but at first it was scarcely possible to arrive at more than its drift — the mere phrases she could not scan or scrutinise. The amazing cowardice of the writer's actions and the astounding insolence of his explanation of them, even that could hardly be fully realised in a first reading of the letter.

The cowardice of his flight — for it was merely a flight — and the bold use of his knowledge of her character, even these she only comprehended gradually. He knew her pride and independence of character, and he traded on them hardily, for he was certain that she would make no attempt to bring him back or to force her claims upon him.

She scorned him much more than she blamed him. That the whole letter was one lie, she had no doubt, though she was not able to controvert the facts it made so cool a show of presenting. Certainly he had not loved her, and she was now far from desirous of telling herself that she had loved him. As to their marriage, she took it for granted that he was stating what was the legal truth. She remembered at once Bringali's veiled questions concerning the ceremony and its celebration in the Greek consulate-chapel only, and she did not doubt that Eustachio was correct in his report of there being no registration even of the one insufficient marriage.

For a very long time she remained in the garden. The pitiless blue sky, the hard shadows, the metallic green of the citron-leaves, and the ashen grey of the olives became a picture that she never forgot and never ceased to hate. The sound of the water-wheel, the scream of the grasshoppers and cicala, were poured into her ears like molten lead into the ears of a martyr.

One thing she would never do — re-enter Eustachio's house. After she had been for a long time sitting as

motionless as a Madonna in a pietà, a servant came out and told her that her midday-meal was ready.

"I shall not come in. I do not want any. Send to the address on this card, and tell the man to come here."

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"Angry!"

"Yes. I was afraid some one might have been telling lies of me. No one could tell you anything true to make you angry with me."

"I sent for you because you are the only friend I can call mine in all the world."

She spoke in a plain, even voice that made her words seem much more terrible to Bringali. It was he, not

she, who found them horribly pathetic. He had always thought of her, instinctively, as a great lady, belonging to the greatest of all great people; her marriage had seemed to his faultless instinct an inconceivable condescension.

Perhaps he was even shocked at hearing himself called her friend.

He touched his forehead, his lips, and his breast, and then the ground at her feet — then, and not till then, he kissed his finger tips.

"Your slave!" he said.

Any one who knows the Arab will realise how intensely moved he must have been.

"I want you to help me," she told him. "I want to go away from this place at once. Is there any ship leaving immediately? If not, find out when there is one. . . ."

"There is a ship to-day, this afternoon, going to Sfax: but it is small and uncomfortable."

"Never mind. But I shall want money. Do you know where I could sell these rings? Could you sell them for me and bring me the money?"

He said that he could, while she was drawing from her beautiful fingers the rich rings that Bringali had often admired, and that had so unhappily deceived Eustachio. She took off her wedding ring also, but laid it on the stone slab beside her.

"Only one of them would fetch a great deal of money," suggested Bringali; "would it not be better to sell only one here? If necessary you could sell the others afterwards — in Europe."

"Take them all and see. If one brings enough, that will do: if not, sell them all."

He took them all obediently, and went away.

"As you pass through the house tell Ibrahim to come to me," she told him.

It never occurred to her that she would not see Bringali or any of her rings again.

Ibrahim came out to her, and she bade him have her clothes packed, and her jewel-case brought out to her there.

In about an hour Bringali returned with all the rings but one.

"Here is the money," he said. "Three thousand francs. I expect it ought to be more: but it took a long time to get the Jew to give even this. I asked five thousand and he offered two. When I stuck out he pretended to wonder where I got the ring, and talked of having me brought before the governor. That would have been bad, for it would waste time, and your ship would have gone away without you: but I said 'Yes, do! The governor is my master's uncle, and will be cross with him for selling his ring. And my master will see that you are ruined.' Then he agreed to give me the three thousand."

Gillian thanked him earnestly and gave him back two hundred and fifty francs: but he would not take them.

She did not know how to press him: she had called him her friend, and friends are not paid for their service.

On her wrist was a plain gold curb bracelet with a watch in it. It was really worth much more than the notes for two hundred and fifty frances.

"Will you take this?" she asked him. "My father gave it to me."

That he did take, and very proudly he wore it. Presently he went with her down to the ship, and saw her baggage carried thither. Gillian herself hardly realised how devoted his services were — seeing that he was sending her away for ever. That he was a good lad she had always known; that he worshipped her, as the commonest weed worships the sun, she never knew.

BOOK II

CHAPTER XXI

"WHO is that lady — over there by the fireplace?"

"With the wonderful hair? She is an Italian, a Duchessa di Torre Greca. She came here with Lady Avonsbury. I asked Jack Bulford, whom I had seen talking to her, and he told me she is staying with his mother."

"Is the dark fellow, who is speaking to her, her husband? He looks like an Italian."

"He is Italian, one of the attachés of the Italian embassy; but he is not her husband, for she is a widow."

"I intend to be introduced: so do you, I think."

"After you!" laughed Mr. Loughborough, who was always obliging.

Mr. Andros accepted the precedence offered him, and moved away as if to try and obtain the introduction at once. He knew Lady Avonsbury, and had not yet spoken to her since her arrival. He walked with a slight limp, which somehow seemed to suit him. His figure was excellent, in spite of the fact that one leg was now imperceptibly shorter than the other. He was still young, not quite thirty, and his appearance was altogether distinguished, though he had never been admittedly handsome.

"May I be introduced to the duchessa?" he asked, as soon as he could do it without seeming to have spoken to Lady Avonsbury for no other purpose.

"Certainly: but she does not dance."

"Nor do I now. At least I have not tried since my rheumatic fever."

"How stupid of me! Forgive me: you do not *look* as if you could not dance. Perhaps you *will* try."

Lady Avonsbury was a kind person, and not generally tactless: she was rather annoyed with herself. She turned to the duchessa at once, and introduced Mr. Andros to her.

"Lady Avonsbury tells me you do not dance," he said presently.

"I might say 'I don't know, I have never tried,' like the man who was asked if he played the violin."

"Neither do I dance, though I used to. But would you sit out this dance with me? It is much cooler outside."

The lady whom Mr. Loughborogh had called an Italian at once consented; and on his arm she moved through the crowd to a large winter-garden that opened out of the ball-room.

She was nearly as tall as Mr. Andros, and had at least as much distinction of manner and appearance, but the lady was undeniably beautiful, whereas many stupid people considered Philip Andros plain.

Her hair was what usually attracted attention at first, on account of its unusual dark red colour, but her eyes, of nearly the same peculiar shade of chocolate-brown, were large and full of dignity; her skin was singularly white, and her features exquisitely moulded.

She thoroughly understood the art of dress, and her present costume, of a then very rare shade of green, suited her striking and singular colouring perfectly, though it might have been trying to a complexion that was merely pale.

"Lady Avonsbury is a very old friend of mine," said Mr. Andros, when they had seated themselves among the palms of the winter-garden.

"She is a very kind friend of mine; but I have no old friends in England. I have not been long in England."

"Perhaps you are a Roman. I have always heard that many of the great Roman families talk English perfectly."

The Duchessa di Torre Greca smiled.

"I accept the implied compliment to my English. You think I talk it like an Englishwoman?"

"Well, no. Perhaps you talk it too correctly. . . ."

She laughed and continued —

"But I am not a Roman, even by marriage. My husband was Neapolitan."

Mr. Andros, who was inwardly admiring her wonderful green dress, concluded that she had been a widow some time.

"I will not mystify you," said the duchessa, "I am not a foreigner of any sort: but we always lived abroad, and I was not born in England."

Mr. Andros supposed that "we" meant the lady and her late husband. Perhaps she was the daughter of a diplomat, and had married early. She was still very young, and her married life must have been brief.

"And now that you are come home, do you like England? People of English birth who have lived too much out of it often find many faults with it."

"I have never wished to find any. But I do not care much for London."

Mr. Andros looked extremely pleased.

"Nor I. I am a country bird. Perhaps I am too vain to care much for London. I am a very little pig up here."

"Is that English English?" The duchessa laughed a little: her companion did not look at all a little pig. While she was laughing Mr. Andros was telling himself how rare a feature a really beautiful mouth is, and

how much more important really beautiful teeth are than he had ever before supposed.

He did not explain that, whatever he might be in London, he was a very big "pig" indeed in Rentshire.

"I also am English with a foreign name," he told her. "When Philip II. came here to marry Queen Mary my ancestor came with him, as one of his gentlemen: and like his master he married an Englishwoman: but when the king went back to Spain Don Jaime Andros remained in England. His eldest son was the king's godson, and the eldest son in my family has been Philip ever since."

Mr. Andros did not think it necessary to add that Don Jaime's wife had been the heiress of a very old and wealthy but untitled family, that many of the descendants of that marriage had also taken to themselves wives of high position and large estate. But it was the fact that the Andros estates, to which he had himself lately succeeded, were among the most important in Rentshire.

"Why don't you like London?" he asked her presently. "It always seems to me that it is the only thing in England foreigners really care about, and though you are English you might naturally have a foreigner's way of thinking."

"It is too big: too rich; and too smart. I wanted to come *home*, and London is not anybody's home so far as I can see. Every one I meet assures me that his home is in Scotland, or Ireland, or Wales, or at all events Northumberland or Devonshire."

"I like your reason. I could never think of London as home, though as it happens I was born in it."

Apparently the young duchessa did not care enough for any house she might have in Italy to regard it as home. As a matter of fact, she had none, for though her husband had left her a considerable fortune, his

estates had gone at his death to a somewhat distant cousin.

"It is rather odd, after all, that you do not dance," Mr. Andros observed; "you must have had to say so very often."

"No. I was never at a ball before to-night."

Mr. Andros did not look surprised, but he felt a little surprise all the same. A beautiful and apparently wealthy young lady of two or three-and-twenty has generally been at plenty of such entertainments.

"My husband was always an invalide," said the duchessa, "and when my father was alive he and I were for ever wandering about Europe. People who live in hotels and are never for two months in the same town are not much troubled by invitations."

"I should hate moving about continually. I like to go abroad, but I am not sure that the best part of it is not the feeling of having a return-ticket in one's pocket."

"We never had a return-ticket. We hardly ever went back anywhere. My father said that to renew a lapsed acquaintance is trying to both parties: if *they* have not grown older one may have grown older oneself."

Mr. Andros, on rather slight evidence, decided that he would have disliked the duchessa's father.

"Which of the places you visited did you like best?"

"They were none of them *friends*. Among foreign cities I have only a large acquaintance. Naples was perhaps the most amusing, Rome the most *simpatica*."

All the time they were talking Mr. Andros was studying his companion. Her beauty did not become less striking, but of her character he seemed to catch few decisive intimations. Her manner was easy and friendly, but there was a peculiar suggestion of pride

that he could not understand. It was not the pride of conscious beauty, or of wealth, or of station; but it was *armed;* such pride as a very poor though noble woman might be driven on as a defence or a protest. The young duchessa had a serene air, and was always sure of herself, but the serenity, though calm, was almost too intense, and her self-possession, though not haughty, was rather like that of a gracious but loyal person accustomed to treat few people quite as equals.

Mr. Andros found the puzzle interesting, for the lady was altogether interesting herself.

Her face told no tale of premature suffering or trial, nevertheless her sureness of herself by no means implied certainty of other people, and young as she certainly was, she gave an impression of large experience. Perhaps it was merely a natural result of a life spent in seeing nearly all that Europe has to show.

CHAPTER XXII

A WEEK later Mr. Andros again found himself talking to the Duchessa di Torre Greca. He had often thought of her in the meantime, but had made no attempt to inform himself about her by questions asked of other people. If she were a puzzle he preferred to make her solve the riddle herself.

The young widow was at the opera, in her friend Lady Avonsbury's box: and Mr. Andros thought it civil to come up and talk to his mother's old friend.

"And now," said the good-natured dowager, "you have quite done the pretty by me — you can talk to the duchessa."

"The duchessa looks as if she were actually listening to the music and did not want to talk to anybody."

"All the same, when Jack comes he will make her talk to him if you don't: so you must shift for yourself."

He took the empty chair by the duchessa and said:

"You are evidently not quite English, for you seem to come here to listen to the singing."

"I apologise. What do you come for?"

"To hear what you think of it."

"One might discuss that afterwards."

"If one were sure of meeting. But I never trust chances when I can secure certainties. I will confess, if you like, that I don't care much for opera: the music spoils the acting and the acting spoils the music. That lady could die much better in prose: to expire on such a very high register may be an achievement, but it isn't convincing. I don't believe she is dead at all."

"Perhaps you have seen her, or heard her, die before."

"Nine times since Easter."

"Yet she doesn't look like a cat."

"Anything but. . . . Would you mind if I gave over talking about the opera, for I really do not know anything about music?"

"Nor I. I have no accomplishments, and scarcely any tastes. I know something about painting, and on the whole dislike it."

"Perhaps I know less: but I have a good many fine pictures, and I rather like them."

"A harmless taste — do not suppose I wish to interfere with it. Only my father and I chiefly lived on his paintings and I can't consider them unprofessionally."

Mr. Andros did not always find his companion's remarks easy to answer; they were too apt to suggest a question, and he was not much troubled by the intolerable habit of asking personal questions. The result was a rather frequent change of subject.

"The best of our pictures at home," he said, "are the portraits; and as they are by famous and great painters they seem to me interesting apart from family considerations. There is a wonderful group by Sir Antonio Moro of Don Jaime and his wife, with the small Philip standing between them. Did your father paint portraits or subject-pictures?"

"He painted chiefly landscapes. But he made a very good portrait of myself."

Mr. Andros wondered if they had "lived on" it also for a time. But naturally did not say so.

"I have it still. For a long time it was rolled up, but my husband admired it, and had it framed."

"I should like to have the chance of seeing it."

"When I have a house to put it in, you may come

and see it. But I do not know when I shall settle down; and I may decide on living somewhere quite out of your reach."

"Why not try my own county? It has a good many things in its favour. The villages are beautiful, and almost all of them have fine old manor-houses that could easily be made into homes. You had better buy one."

"They sound expensive," said the duchessa, laughing. "I should like to live in a house that was my own, but I may have to be content with something less than a fine old manor-house."

"Oh, but some of them would be quite cheap. You would not want a lot of land. I can't offer to sell you one, for I can sell nothing at Andros, as it is all entailed. But in our own village there is a delightful old house, with a tiny park, called 'Moat,' that, as it happens, you could buy to-morrow if you chose."

The duchessa was not thinking of Mr. Andros, but of his proposal. She really longed to be settled down in a home of her own, and she could afford to buy something moderate.

"About how much would such a house cost?" she asked with evident interest.

"I know exactly what it would cost: six thousand pounds. There is a panelled hall, and the principal rooms are panelled also. The place is small, but very complete, and decent people have always lived in it. You would have very little to alter. Lady Avonsbury, please advise the duchessa to buy 'Moat.'"

"A most selfish proposal. You would gain her as a neighbour, but I should be sending her to the other end of England. I shall advise her to buy a house near Avonsbury."

"I don't believe there is anything for her to buy. Everything in that neighbourhood is your own. Be

more altruistic. Besides, you can come and stay with me and see as much of the duchessa as you choose."

Lady Avonsbury's younger son, Mr. Jack Bulford, now entered the box, and Mr. Andros presently gave him his seat beside the duchessa and took the one next his old friend.

"I am sure 'Moat' would suit your friend very well," he said. "Think better of it, and advise her in its favour."

"It would be a waste of money," said the cheerful dowager in a low tone.

"On the contrary, it is very cheap. I believe the tapestry and panelling alone are worth the price."

"When I used to hear my boys their Latin grammar, there was an 'example' which said *Quod non opus est asse carum est.* What one has no need of is dear at a penny."

"But she *has* need of it. She wants to have a home of her own in England: she says so."

"Dull young man! There is better tapestry and far more panelling at Andros."

Mr. Andros laughed.

"That is a good idea, I admit," he said. "But would Jack approve of it?"

He glanced at his friend, who seemed to be enjoying his *tête-à-tête* with the duchessa.

"Oh, Jack is provided for. He and Lady Hester have agreed that their tastes are so dissimilar that they are bound to get on. All the same it's a secret, and you are not to let him know I told you. Besides, I should not allow Jack to marry a Catholic."

"She is a Catholic?"

"Yes. I suppose so."

In this, Lady Avonsbury was wrong; for the duchessa was not of that religion, though Mr. Andros was

"Don't make her buy 'Moat,'" said Lady Avons-

bury. "She is a person who needs large surroundings. Andros would suit her better."

"I'll bear it in mind. But I'm not so sure of her tastes as you seem to be. She might like Andros, but I doubt if she would care for its master."

"Why not ascertain?"

"I'll bear that suggestion in mind also."

Though his old friend watched him closely, she could not make out whether his laughing tone covered any serious purpose or no. Mr. Andros was not much in the habit of letting people guess his sentiments or intentions.

He was too much interested in the duchessa to be able to abstain from watching her. He had so placed himself that he could look at her and seem merely to have his eyes turned to the stage. When she, too, looked at the stage it was only her hair, the curve of her cheek, her neck, and one exquisite small ear that he could see. When, however, she turned to answer some remark of Mr. Bulford's, nearly her whole face was shown to him.

Mr. Andros found her beauty far greater now that he had studied it more deliberately. It had a peculiar and rare quality that scarcely yielded itself fully to any first impression. The features were almost perfect, and the colouring, uncommon and surprising as it was, was faultless. But the same features and colouring might have been there, and yet the wonderful beauty have been missing. "Nevertheless," he told himself, "she is not so lovely as she might be — as she must be. It is a splendid lamp, but it has never been lighted."

He imagined a story for her, and as far as it went it was true, for he was a man of intuition.

She had spoken to him of her husband, and in the brief allusion made he detected, he told himself, that

her husband had loved her, and that she had been a fond and devoted wife to him, but that she had not yet ever really loved.

That was why the lamp, for all its marvel of beauty, was still unlighted.

He did not accuse her of being soulless: she would have failed to interest him, if he had been able to bring any such charge. He was sure there was a soul, and not a mean one, but it was in embryo, unawakened. Sorrow had failed to awaken it — had merely chilled it; and love, he divined, had never spoken to it.

Her attitude towards life itself was also, he told himself, unusual and worthy of attention. She was interested, but aloof; guarded, not without apprehension. And the meaning of this he could not yet explain. That she was a burned child, dreading the fire, intuition alone could not inform him.

Her interest in life was too general: almost impersonal. The attention which, he perceived, she would at that moment have preferred to give to the stage, instead of diverting it to her cheerful young companion, was much the same attention as she gave to life around her. She could not be stupid, and could not, therefore, look abroad superficially, with merely trivial observation. But the world was at present chiefly a notable phenomenon, which she had no care to seize as an experience.

So far Mr. Andros, with keen and interested eyes, could see: he could not know, and did not merely guess, that she had had a surfeit of experience.

"You are an odd man," said Lady Avonsbury, who had been observing him quite as closely as he had been studying the duchessa.

"That is my misfortune, not my fault. What form is my oddity taking just now?"

"It would be so easy to ask me questions about her."

Lady Avonsbury's voice was low, and the music rather loud. There was no risk of her remarks reaching the ears of the girl they concerned.

"And so stupid! A footman can ask questions."

"Not of me very well. I want to talk about her, and the simplest way is to tell you all I know — which you may very well know already. For instance, her Christian name."

"I have heard you call her Gillian."

"I didn't remember that you had heard me. Her father was an old admirer of mine, or I was an admirer of his — I can't quite remember which it was."

"Her father, if he knew you at all, must have been too sensible not to be an admirer of yours."

"He wasn't sensible a bit. He chose to live abroad, because England was not clever enough for him; and he married a Russian, who got tired of him, and went to look for a little common sense in another world. This young lady was the result."

"An odd result of such an excursion. One can, however, see she is not quite earthly."

Lady Avonsbury laughed gently, but went on with her story.

"He was Rupert Thesiger, and as soon as his cousin Desmond dies, she will be Lady Glentilt. After her father died she married an Italian duke, who was old enough to have been her father too, if fate had so arranged it. They were married about a year, and then he too died, and left her all he could; for he adored her, and she had been a devoted wife. So she is rich enough, and will inevitably be a good deal richer."

"She may be as poor as Queen Cophetua for all it matters to me."

"Of course. It always goes like that. People who have to be careful never are. And those who could

afford to marry poorly always fall in love with people who are extremely well off."

"At all events, she can afford to buy 'Moat,' and it is a silly scruple of yours to try and prevent her wasting her money."

"It is not silly. If she buys 'Moat,' you and she will go on studying each other for ever."

CHAPTER XXIII

Whether Lady Avonsbury approved of it or no, 'Moat' was bought, and the Duchessa di Torre Greca took up her abode there. Entering on this new possession gave her a number of sensations almost more agreeable than any she had ever known. The ownership of land, which appeals so peculiarly to Englishmen, had never appealed much to her father. He would have liked well enough to possess a fine estate, because he would have enjoyed a large income; and he was worldly-wise enough to be aware that an equal income derived from other sources would not, in England, dignify their possessor with the same degree of importance. But he had no sentiment about it. His daughter's feeling was nearly all sentiment.

The land-agents had assured her that 'Moat' was an excellent investment, but as an investment it did not in the least interest her. One of them had hinted, when the purchase was complete, that she might readily sell the tapestry, if she liked, for half of what she had paid for the whole property. And there was a roomful of carved oak that another agent believed might be sold for at least £2000. As the design involved a good deal of repetition of armorial bearings that were not her own, he thought it possible that the young duchessa might be willing to have the oak removed, and an American client of his, unvexed by coat-armour, would probably be glad to buy it for the sixteenth century mansion he was building "on" Fifth Avenue.

But the duchessa had no desire to make money out of her purchase, and was very decided in her refusal

to spoil the old house for the sake of making it a cheaper bargain.

"The owner's price," she said, "was £6000, and I have given him what he asked. But if I were to sell these fittings for such sums as you suggest I should feel bound in honesty to send the money to him. As it is I feel they are honestly my own."

In spite of the armorial bearings, which were not those of her own family, and in spite of the fact that she bought most of the old furniture from the former owner, she impressed her identity upon the place; and this was the more significant as she had very little of her own to put into it, and that little was bought on purpose. She had no lifelong possessions.

Her father's portrait of herself, and a miniature of her late husband, were the only portraits she possessed. But she had accompanied Lady Avonsbury to a London saleroom, and had there bought a few really good old Italian pictures. Their prices had struck her as singularly low.

"Oh, yes, cheap as dirt, I dare say," her friend had said; "but you see they are saints and miracles, and that sort of thing. There's no market for saints at present."

It was Gillian's purchase of these pictures that made Lady Avonsbury think she must be a Catholic. On the oak panels at 'Moat' the rich frames of gilded and carved wood looked very much at home, and Gillian had the knack of placing a thing so that it seemed to have been there always.

When Mr. Andros paid his first visit he was at once attracted by the pictures.

"You pretended to have no tastes, and plainly asserted that you did not really care for pictures," he said.

"Perhaps I meant modern pictures — and especially

landscapes. Do you think that 'Madonna' can really be a Botticelli? The angels are just like his."

"And not a bit like angels."

"I dare say. But they are very like Florentine boys, and I am more used to Florentine boys than to angels. It doesn't pretend to be a Botticelli, but only 'By an Italian painter unknown.'"

"Perhaps it is a school-picture, by some of Sandro's pupils."

"I hope so. In that case Sandro may have seen it, and known the boys whom his pupils made into angels. Don't you like the bit of garden? I long to go round the corner and see what there is beyond the fountain."

"This head might be a Massaccio."

"You only say so because of the scarlet cap. It was sold as a 'Saint unknown.' He may have been a saint afterwards, but I'm sure the portrait was before his conversion. His melancholy is of this world."

Mr. Andros was interested by this slight criticism, and agreed with it.

The youth's expression was rather of worldly discontent and disappointment than of spiritual longing unsatisfied.

"You are quite right. That's lads sins never troubled him, though they may have caused his trouble."

"One's sins are apt to cause other people's trouble rather than our own."

It was a remark different from any Gillian had yet made to him, and it somehow disturbed her hearer. Men are seldom pleased with pessimism in other people.

"According to some people," he replied, "that is one of the great arguments for a future life — to adjust the inequalities, and vindicate justice."

"Is it?"

Almost immediately she directed his attention to another picture: a crucifixion with three fifteenth-century figures in the foreground.

"I'm sure they are not intended for saints but for portraits. That was what interested me. Even the kneeling nun is not meant for a saint — you see she is a Benedictine. The old noble and his wife are her parents. I believe the picture was painted for her, so that she might have their portraits in her convent."

Mr. Andros at once felt that she was right in her judgment. But something in her remark again almost displeased him.

The only appeal of the picture was apparently to the girl's historic sense.

"May I ask a question?" he inquired abruptly: and Gillian was already aware that he asked but few questions.

"Certainly."

"Lady Avonsbury told me that you were a Catholic."

"Oh no! My husband, of course, was: and my father became a Catholic on his deathbed. I am not one."

She gave no further information, and he asked no further question.

She might have said that she was of no religion: but it was so true that she did not even know it.

"Your father's becoming a Catholic did not make you think of it? You were with him?"

"Oh yes, I was with him. Of course it made me think — that he had become a Catholic. And I was glad — because he evidently wished it. I liked him to do what he wanted: it did not affect me otherwise."

Soon Mr. Andros went away, and Gillian walked out into her garden; it was a delightful place, with one or two beautiful old cedars, and such lawns as only cen-

turies can make. There was a sun-dial, with a leaden face, and the inscription:

"*Pereunt et imputantur.*"

It seemed to her that such a warning in such a place must always have been a menace. She could not connect with the placid, sleepy garden, and the ancient house dozing in the sun, the idea of scrupulous use of time, of strenuous action meant benevolently.

Her own hours — would they, too, be "imputed"? What, in all her life, had she done with them? Had she not been a mere stroller, a half-bored pilgrim bound for no intended goal, tired with doing nothing, content if no day contained too many tedious hours.

CHAPTER XXIV

She turned from the sun-dial, and slowly paced across the soft velvet of the grass to a seat beneath one of the cedars, and immediately opened the book in her hand to give herself new thoughts — other folks' thoughts, since her own had taken a tinge of wistfulness.

"O Love!" she read, "O wound of life and death
Parted so wide by such a narrow breath!
Love that turns bitter all of life that's sweet
And love that makes the terror of Death's feet!
O death and life, two meanings of one word!
O Love whose curse makes death or life abhorr'd!"

She shut the book and looked up from it across the empty garden towards the empty house. Nothing could be more beautiful than the picture. Behind the gables rose the tops of "immemorial elms," beyond them pastures rising easily into a sunny upland. The elms were full of rooks, whose idleness made them talkative: the sky above the upland meadows was pale grey-blue, cloudless and remote. To the right of the house, from another group of trees, rose the square, low tower of the ancient church, and lazily, slowly its chimes began to tell of another hour gone — another trickle of time lapsed into the bitter ocean of eternity.

"*Imputantur!*"

She scarcely knew which teased her most, the threat of the worn inscription on the sundial, or the meaning of

those half-dozen lines of verse. She was becoming quite suddenly aware that her life had never had any purpose, scarcely any definite significance. The dial warned of duty; the poem, if it were a poem, cried almost bitterly of a meaning of life at least mastering. The sickly sweet talk of love common to so many of the romances she had read had never struck her: there was nothing in her that answered to it. But the thought of love as a hard and cruel master, not gilding life prettily but dominating it roughly, was at all events arresting. Life so mastered could hardly be flat and empty, though it might be difficult — perhaps insupportable.

For centuries her house — that lichen-rusted mansion, blinking now in the yellow sunlight — that had become hers, had stood there, surrounded by its smooth lawns, themselves girt by the broad moat in which flowers and trees reflected themselves; it had been a home for scores of generations. Of those who had lived there not all could have been old; had this hard master of love that the verse cried of (for it was a cry rather than a song) been tyrant to some of them? Had young free hearts beat here with passionate longing, with such agony of desire to be gone from it as had made it a smug prison? There was nothing to make the notion other than fantastic — except the perverse logic of fierce contrast. Have not the cruellest battles been fought upon the most smiling pastoral plains? All this demure serenity around her might, after all, have been the insufferable setting of wild rebellion, that wildest rebellion where the upstart is oneself, driven to war with self.

Long ago Gillian had suddenly grown sick with hunger for rest, wearied with the stale vanity of perpetual movement from one homelessness to another. The echo of that longing had brought her here as mistress

of this very place. And now she, as suddenly, felt a stab of dread lest the peace she had come for should flatten into mere stagnation.

Two things had been wanting in her life, and she had not been conscious of the lack of either; some faint and vague forewarning of one of them was just beginning to stir her with uneasy foreboding.

Neither God nor love had she yet known, and it was only the second of these that was at last drawing near to whisper chilly in her ear.

Almost without ordinary education of any sort, of religious teaching she had none whatever. The exterior of religion she had seen, and had regarded indifferently, not attracted by it. Her father had always had a pale aesthetic taste for the pictorial aspect of worship, and with him she had from time to time been present at splendid or merely picturesque ceremonies. He had enjoyed them superficially, untouched by their inward significance; and she had scarcely enjoyed them at all, not being much given to superficial gazings, and hardly troubling to wonder if any inward significance were there. The Church had given her only the idea of an antique institution sometimes heavily grandiose in its manifestations of itself. It was a corporation, a body: but as of a body whose soul was God Himself she had never thought of it. Nor had she really ever thought of God.

That He was the creator of all things she had, of course, heard; and had accepted the statement as an axiom without personal bearing of any kind. That things must have a cause was evident, and that God was the cause was no doubt correct. But it did not particularly interest her. The universe was so unimaginably old that she had never wearied herself by the endeavour to imagine its first beginning: origins were too remote to engage her personal interest. This may

not sound intelligent; nevertheless Gillian was intelligent, but her intelligence was in fact unawakened, as may be the case with immense numbers of human beings with faculties as fine as hers.

Sorrow had dazed without awaking her.

"I only said of His winds of the north, as I shrank from their chill,
'What profit in these?'"

Her sufferings had come to her as senseless blows against whose force she must merely numb herself to endure, lest they should simply crush her. She had never even cried out against them as outrages of irresponsible omnipotence — even that would have been more spiritual, more of a first, staggering, blind step towards higher knowledge than her dull acquiescence. She had not so much as called them stings of Fate: for even Fate is personal. She had not even the pagan's sense of a personal will and force in the inexplicable tangle of events. It would be a libel on paganism to say that Gillian had been a pagan all her life. The pagan had his scheme of life, and his notion of effect and cause; his gods were often meaner than men, often more disreputable, but he had gods. To her life was not a thread tangled by intricate and opposing destinies; it was not a thread at all, for the most tenuous thread has continuity, however involved and twisted. She had never discerned purposes, even conflicting purposes, in its jumbled progression: much less a serene, inexorable, imperturbable purpose.

She had often perceived, almost with wonder, that her father had, in spite of his triviality, really enjoyed life: she may have been tempted to ascribe the fact to the very triviality. She was so far from trivial herself that she had never been able to enjoy life in any

higher sense than that of occasionally receiving pleasant impressions — from a book, a person, or a scene of beauty too insistent to be ignored. It was true that she had never much wished to die, but that meant no more than that her health had mostly been excellent, and healthy animals tend to life naturally: existence was all she had, and to change it for non-existence could be but a bleak idea.

Now there began to arise in her what was at first no better than a half-uneasy suspicion that life might have a meaning altogether definite, but probably of acrid intensity.

Love might be the real significance of all that confused turmoil that is called life: the suspicion, however, did not lead her to turn a welcoming face, as one expecting benefits. He might have gifts ready for her acceptance, but she misdoubted he would be but a Greek with gifts.

It was a sorry enough first stirring from sleep, but it was a beginning to awake.

If Love came she knew already how he would draw near — to hurt her, perhaps. She at once personified him. It seemed to herself that until now, this very afternoon, she had been armed in indifference: no one in all the world, she told herself, had been more to her than any other. But if Love were really to torment her she knew in what shape he would attack. In fixing on this place for her home, almost at haphazard, she had not thought at all of Philip Andros: nevertheless she at once thought of him now. She had never been vain, or given to imagine men in love with her: nor did she in the least fancy that her pleasant neighbour had fallen in love; but she had a sharp instinct that she would love him.

The thought was utterly unwelcome. It was hateful to think that she should be in love with a man

whom she had pursued, as it would seem, almost to his very threshold. Why had she not bought a home somewhere else, far away? She had heard of at least forty other houses that she might have bought.

She tried the folly of mere reasoning: what was there in this man to make her afraid? She had met scores of men more agreeable: she was not certain that he was agreeable at all. He was courteous, but unyielding: a man of rigid convictions, that he would never bate for her sake, or any one's. She did not believe that he approved of her, however he might admire her. He was not nearly so handsome as dozens of others whose appearance she had not considered to be worth a thought. His manners were irreproachable, but who cares for manners in a question of love? And his manner was at times almost stiff, doubting, as if he were weighing her for admiration or censure. Witty he was not, not even amusing: inferior he assuredly was not, but superiority may be more forbidding.

It was no good. "He is himself" was the sum of all that she endeavoured to object against him. It did not strike her that his own conclusions would have been the same if he had argued, as he did not, with himself against her.

CHAPTER XXV

She rose from her seat under the cedar, and left her book, to pace the flagged walks of her garden. Along them were broad borders set with old-fashioned flowers and herbaceous plants — lupins, lavender bushes, "red-hot poker," sunflowers, hollyhocks, and peonies. There was a bowling-green, with a breast-high hedge of box, and four leaden statues of heathen deities, one at each corner; from this a wider path led to a stone pond with a water-nymph, also of lead, in the middle. A few goldfishes, elderly and stout, lived in the water among the long dark-brown stalks of the water-lilies.

The garden was not very large, and from every part of it the house could be seen, for it was flat, and the few trees were not crowded together into thick groups. The present house was Early Tudor, built probably a generation or so after the end of the War of the Roses. It was of stone, grey, but rusted with yellow lichen here and there. The oldest part was battlemented, but the end where the gables were had been added in Queen Elizabeth's time. The great Civil War of the seventeenth century had not troubled it; no din of war had ever scandalised its imperturbable peace.

Gillian looked about her, and told herself how thoroughly the place realised the ideal she had had in buying it. Everything suggested a demure ease and restfulness. It did not seem like the home of realised ambition, or a cradle of ambitions to be fought for. The still, soft air, the mellow sunlight, were like an inaudible breathing, a smile that would never break into a

laugh. There was no suggestion of wealth, proud or responsible, and none of poverty, anxious and ill-content.

Any one would have said that "Moat" was precisely the fit home for a widow, though a different sort of widow from Gillian might have been intended — a woman older, with less of life before her, one whose part had been already played. Nevertheless, as she walked in her garden, she seemed to belong to it, and might have been there always, like one of the pictures she had put upon the walls.

Presently a servant came out and told her that a visitor was in the drawing-room. She took the card the man gave her. It was that of the clergyman, and she told the footman to bring the gentleman out into the garden, walking herself towards the house to meet him. The Reverend Alured Wentworth was the name upon the card.

When Mr. Wentworth appeared he struck his hostess as rather young to be the vicar, which he almost immediately explained that he was not.

"The real vicar," he said, "is Mr. Puckling. And he had to go abroad for a year, owing to his health. I am only his *locum tenens*. Mrs. Puckling is my aunt, you know — at least, I mean —"

"Shall we sit down here?" said the young duchessa, leading him to the seat beneath the cedar, where her book of verse was still lying. Mr. Wentworth sat down on the other side of it, politely trying not to look at the open page. He was one of those people who can hardly be near a book without taking it up.

"O Love! O death and life! O wound of life and death!"

He read in spite of himself, and then looked away across the moat to the meadows. He had not a bit

the air of a parish clergyman on a professional visit.

"I called," he explained rather shyly, "because we are such near neighbours. I hope you do not mind."

Gillian laughed.

"Why should I mind? It is very friendly of you."

"I thought that perhaps, not being a parishioner, you might be bored."

"Am I not a parishioner? Your parish must be very small or very oddly divided if I am not in it."

"I meant that, being a Catholic, you might not care much for parsons. My uncle warned me not to go to Andros Court except when invited."

"I am not a Catholic; and if I were, your uncle need not have warned you against me."

"Oh, he did not."

The young man seemed quite troubled at the notion. He did not appear to be brilliant, but he was undoubtedly a gentleman, and Gillian rather liked him. He was not stupid, only very boyish. There was nothing austerely clerical about him or about his clothes, and, though he occasionally looked shy, he was not a bit awkward. He had the knack of sitting down well — which not every man has — neither sprawling or planting himself rigidly. Also he knew how to shake hands, not limply, and yet without the convulsive squeeze of would-be cordiality. Finally, he had an excellent figure, and was uncommonly handsome.

"You know Mr. Andros, I suppose?" she said, presently.

"Oh yes. He called, and asked me to luncheon, and afterwards to dinner. My uncle says it is a disadvantage for a small parish like this for the squire to be a Catholic: but I can't see it myself. He does just as much for the poor people as if they were of his faith, and a great deal more than many Protestant squires."

"Are they all of your Church — the poor people?"

"In this parish nearly all. At Andros village, over there, they are mostly Catholics. But our people are all his tenants: it makes no difference."

"If Mr. Andros is not bigoted, neither are you, I think," said Gillian, smiling. She liked the young man's hearty tone.

"I! oh no. I've nothing to be bigoted about. Mr. Andros seems to know a great deal more about Church history, general councils, and all that sort of thing, than I do."

Gillian laughed again, and her visitor laughed too, good-humouredly, as against himself.

"When I was at Oxford," he confessed, "I was rather idle: and I was in the Eight. It seemed to leave very little time for reading. I just got my degree, that was all."

"Nevertheless you like books."

"Yes, I do: how did you know, though?"

He seemed quite surprised at her answer.

"Only by the way you looked at that one, and tried not to."

"It is rather rude to peep at what people are reading. As you are kind enough to say, I tried not to. May I look now?"

She was not particularly anxious that he should read the poem that lay open between them: but he already had the book in his hand.

"I knew the man who wrote these," he said, after glancing at the title-page. "He was at Oriel, and got ploughed in 'greats.' He's in the City now, and making a very good thing of it. He married a widow with tons of money too: that's why he can afford to bring out his poems like this."

Gillian laughed again: she did not now so much mind

his reading the verses, which he was doing while he was talking.

"I must say," he declared, "that I don't see anything to scold about in life: it strikes me as rather jolly."

"But you haven't married a widow with tons of money."

"They're not so common as all that!"

"Is she common — the poet's wife?"

Mr. Wentworth laughed very cheerfully.

"Not that I know of. Particularly genteel, I dare say. He was rather fastidious. He never would eat beef, because he said it was a middle-class sort of meat."

Across the sunny lawn two footmen came with tea-things and a small table.

"I ought to be going," said Mr. Wentworth. "I'm inflicting a very long visit."

He got up, but Gillian bade him sit down again.

"I don't believe you have anything particular to do, and you had much better stop and have tea here."

He did not require much entreaty.

"It is very good of you to be so friendly," he observed. "I was rather nervous about coming."

"Why should you have imagined me to be so awful? You had not even seen me."

"Yes, I had. That was partly why I came. You did not look at all dreadful: so I made up my mind to come — even if you were a Catholic, and objected to parsons on principle."

"I'm glad it was not merely a sense of duty."

"Anything but!"

It did not strike either of these young people that they had arrived rather quickly at a rather unusual degree of comfortable intimacy. He was so boyish and so hearty that no one could have thought him familiar

or over-easy in his manner to his beautiful hostess, and her frank pleasure in his honest friendliness might have surprised those of her critics who declared that she was haughty.

She had been feeling a little lonely when he arrived, and perhaps she had some vague sub-conscious idea that a good, sound, unsentimental friendship might be a kind of safeguard against love. It certainly did not occur to her that this huge boy might himself fall in love with her.

"Though you did not regard me as an austere duty," she said presently, "or even as a parishioner, I should like, if I could, to be useful. All these poor people of yours (or Mr. Puckling's) seem so nice: they are ever so friendly, and as respectful as if I were their landlord, instead of Mr. Andros. Are any of them so poor that I can help them?"

"I don't think there's much hard poverty here. And they are excellently looked after — I mean by the squire. But there are a few sick whom you might cheer up if you would not mind visiting them."

"Of course I should not mind; but I should be shy, because I should feel as if I were taking a sort of liberty. Why should their being sick expose them to my intrusions?"

Gillian was not English enough to understand the rôle of Lady Bountiful, especially that of the Lady Bountiful armed only with superior rank and prosperous health.

"If I were ill, I should like some one like you to come and see me," said Mr. Wentworth boldly, "and I don't think I should like it any the less that I happened to be a sick labourer."

"If you were ill, which I can't imagine you being, I could not go and see you. Why should it be different if you happened to be a labourer of the same age?"

"I don't know. But it *would* be different."

As a matter of fact, he did know.

"Besides, all sick labourers are not so young as I am. Though the particular one I was really thinking of happens to be younger."

Gillian thought the invalid must be young indeed: though in reality Mr. Wentworth was at least three years older than herself.

During their little meal, Mr. Wentworth waited on her, and she liked his way of doing it. He had a manner, not universal among young men latterly, as if service of a lady were a privilege; in spite of his bigness and boyishness, he was extremely gentle, and he treated her with a pretty respect that had nothing to do with her rank. She felt intuitively that he would have behaved with the same careful deference if she had been old enough to be his mother, and as plain as people's mothers sometimes are.

Almost the only thing she disliked about him was his black coat.

"I want to invite Mr. Andros to dinner," she said. "If you will come too, I can."

Of course he expressed his willingness, though probably he was not much elated by the prospect of playing second fiddle to the squire, who was likely to be so very powerful a first fiddle in such a small party.

CHAPTER XXVI

A DAY or two after this, Gillian went for a walk, and all her walks were solitary; for as yet she had invited no one to come and stay with her. There were not many people whom she could ask, and only a few whom she wished to ask. Lady Avonsbury had promised to come, but she could not come just yet, for she was still in Scotland. At the end of September she would turn south.

The young duchessa had already had visitors, none of whom had been dull or unpleasant, though none so far had been peculiarly interesting. The first batch, from a large country house nearly ten miles away, were cousins of Mr. Andros, but resembled him in nothing but their religion. She thought, probably unfairly, that they had been rather dissatisfied to find she was not a Catholic. One of the young ladies had insisted on talking Italian, which she did with an accent new to Gillian, in which the letter *a* always sounded like *ar*. But all these visitors had been exceedingly cordial, and it was evident that they intended to be neighbourly. If not stimulating, their visits had been far from disagreeable, and Gillian perceived that she need not be lonely.

The country round Moat was pretty, without any striking characteristic: but its absence of remarkable feature seemed to Gillian to give it a sort of homeliness that she liked. The ground was not flat, but its undulations were gentle, and the highest hill could not be more than a couple of hundred feet above the shallow valley. There were many trees, and all the trees seemed to her

singularly beautiful; and the enormous fields, mostly pasture, would have been lovely, even if the tall hedgerows had not here and there been broken by a gigantic elm, or wide-spreading oak. The cottages looked almost as much an expression of nature as the spinnies and the twisting brook.

The village of Moat had no real street, but consisted of thirty or forty cottages, like wren's nests, grouped about a green nearly as smooth as the bowling court in her own garden. No two dwellings were quite alike, and each one had its plot of flowers, that were quite as carefully tended as the cabbages and potatoes. Though really nothing like so old as an Italian *paese*, whose lowest foundations are often Etruscan or Pelasgic, there was here a peculiar air of permanence and stability that defied mere dates.

The farmhouses were generally much older than the cottages, but they scarcely seemed so, perhaps because one could assign to most of them some definite period, Tudor, or Jacobean, or Georgian, whereas the cottages might have been built in any century except the present or its predecessor.

Gillian found England so exquisite that it puzzled and almost annoyed her to remember how her father had been used to scoff at and belittle it. She had a sense of having been defrauded of her birthright by her nomad life of exile. She felt an intense, innate love of every field and hedgerow, every gently varying phase of the calm, sweet landscape, and, with half a pang, realised that she had almost to learn to be an Englishwoman.

Very few acres of English land were even now hers, but it all seemed her own because she seemed to belong to it. The fields outside her particular boundaries did not belong to her less than the ground she had actually bought. There must have been something about

her that gave an instinctive sense to others of her peculiar feeling of having come home: for her humble neighbours, as they met her, at once accepted her, not as a rich lady who had chosen to buy a big house near themselves, but as if she had been a friendly neighbour all her life. Their greeting was not merely respectful, it was kindly; and she returned it with a frankness that might have disconcerted the smart folk in London who had found her haughty and cold.

As she walked to-day the road she followed led over a low bridge, beneath which a shallow stream gurgled coldly, and then became almost a causeway between two patches of sedgy field that were even now like a marsh. What must they be in winter? And yet built in them, not six inches raised above them, were three cottages under one thatch roof. Nothing could be more picturesque than these dwellings, but even Gillian's optimistic delight in prettiness could not make her forget that to live on such oozy ground must make rheumatism a likely neighbour. The cottages had no garden, for it would have been impossible to dig them; the shallowest hole would have filled instantly with water.

In the door of the hut nearest to the path stood an elderly woman with eyes and hair that were like a gypsy's. As Gillian drew near she curtseyed, and gave the lady greeting; and Gillian stood still to ask if she were trespassing, or if the road was public.

"No, indeed, ma'am, no trespass at all. It's a regular road, and nearest way to Norton. Perhaps you're going there, ma'am, but it's not much of a road, and muddy down to the ford."

"I'm not going anywhere in particular; only for a walk."

"P'r'aps you'd step in and rest, ma'am. It's warm walkin', and my son 'd be fine and glad to see 'e."

For her own pleasure Gillian would rather just then have continued her walk. She did not find the September afternoon warm, nor was she tired. But the woman's voice was pleasant, and her tone friendly, and it seemed to the girl that here might be a chance of being, in some small way, useful.

"Your son cannot go out himself? Is he ill?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am; but nothin' catching. Dr. Redpath — that's the club doctor — say he have an A1 cough. You'll excuse the place; it's but small, and all of a caddle, being Saturday."

The cottage was not in fact particularly tidy, but it was clean, and Gillian was not sufficiently used to English peasants' homes to miss the usual neatness.

In a bed opposite the open door lay the young man, whose cough certainly justified the club doctor's classification. His frame was large, and had been unusually strong, but every time he coughed he was shaken almost to pieces. His face was less emaciated than his body, but his temples were now nearly fleshless, and his great black eyes shone with a burning lustre. Their expression was ghastly in its fearful wistfulness. No one could look at him and fail to see how closely death was pressing on him, or how passionately he clung to life.

Like his mother, he had a manner that was neither uncouth, nor coarse, but it was more reserved, and at first Gillian felt shy.

"I hope you do not mind my coming in," she said. "If it makes you tired to have a stranger here, let me go."

"Mind, miss! Indeed, it is a treat to see you." He looked as if it was, and his great eyes scanned his beautiful visitor with undisguised admiration. "I'm only tired of doing nothing, and seeing nobody."

"You'll excuse him calling you 'miss,' ma'am," his mother put in. "Why, Mark, it's the duchess from Moat House."

"I expect," he said, "that 'ma'am' is not much better than 'miss'; but I don't know what's right. We used to call Mr. Andros's mother 'my lady.'"

"Is Mr. Andros your landlord?"

"No, ma'am, we'm our own landlords," explained the woman. "It belongs to we, it do."

"It's nice to live in one's own house; I never did until now," said Gillian.

"There! I'd ha' said your ladyship owned a sight of houses."

Presently Mark's mother said that, if the lady would excuse her, she'd step up to the farm to buy some eggs, and be back in a little minute.

Mark approved the suggestion evidently; and he talked much more freely when he and Gillian were alone.

"Poor mother," he said, "she torments me. I can never forget how ill I am when she stands looking at me. I'm all the child she has, and she can't make her mind up to it."

It was pitifully obvious that he could not make up his mind to it either. He spoke hardily, almost defiantly, but his clinging to life and his desperation were not to be concealed or controlled. To Gill it seemed heartless to be so full of strength and vigour as she felt herself. Words of sympathy failed her, but her eyes did not flinch as they met the dying young man's, and they were more eloquent than she knew.

He lay back and looked at her.

"Does it trouble you," he said, "to see me?"

"Yes," she answered simply, "because I can do nothing and say nothing."

"There's nothing to do or say. Mr. Wentworth tries to say what he has got on his mind, but it won't

come. He comes on purpose to say it, and he can't. He hasn't the face. He's too much of a gentleman. He wants to bid me to look to the world to come, and he knows it's no good; and he can't bring himself to worry me."

Gillian thought of the stalwart body and brimming life of the young clergyman, and knew how true a picture the sick lad was painting.

For a time she did not try to speak, but said presently —

"You speak as if life was a very good thing."

"It's all I ever had. Folks mostly stick to what they've got."

It was so nearly what had been till now her own view of life that it was more than ever hard to think of anything to say by way of reply or comment.

"Most people," she said, for lack of anything better, "seem to think life a finer thing than I have found it."

The young man watched her, always with the same eager attention that was not rude, only embarrassing.

"Troubles," he said, in a very gentle voice, "come to rich and poor."

Then he begged her pardon for perhaps having made her think of what she wished to forget.

"It is not exactly trouble that makes life troublesome," she told him. "But it often *is* troublesome."

"I never minded it. I liked everything. It never bothered me being poor. Some poor folks are for ever envying the rich. I didn't. They may have a bigger-looking bit of the world than me, but I always seemed to have it all."

Gillian knew nothing of English peasants, but she knew that this young fellow could not be a common specimen of them.

"Are you a philosopher or a poet?" she asked smiling.

"I can't tell. It's things I know about, not the names of them. I've read poetry, and mostly thought it fancy stuff. It's life I like — not the talk about it."

"Tell me what you mean by life."

He looked almost disappointed.

"Why, being alive. I like the sun and the earth, the night and stars; seeing them I mean; not hearing folks telling fine things about them. I liked ploughing and the smell of the new furrows, and to watch the starlings and rooks waddling along after me; I expect a poet would not like to hear it called waddling. I liked going out of a January morning when everything was frost-white, before the sun was up, and I had it all to myself. Then to see the land redden like a sunset, and the meadows come green and yellow; and I liked it, too, coming home to my meat, when the fog was crawling along the river-bottoms, and the smoke stood up from the cottage chimneys, and folk bawled out —'Freeze again to-night, Mark! Turble rottin' weather for the roads. But 'elthy. 'Ope yer mother's pretty spankish.' It's grand to be alive. I expect nothing else 'll come up to it."

What else could Gillian suggest? If Mr. Wentworth, whose profession it was to be religious, could not find it in his heart to harangue this lad of the glories of heaven, what could she say, who had never even conjectured much of that undiscovered country?

"It can't all be for nothing," she said tentatively. "A road must lead somewhere."

"That's talking," replied Mark ruthlessly, though not a bit disrespectfully. He recognised instantly that she was trying to say what she ought to say.

"It's easy calling things by other names," he went on. "Life is life. What does it signify calling it a road? *Men* make roads, and know where they're

meant to get to. Call life a game; every one can't win it. Call it a battle; some one must be licked."

"'Licked' ain't no word for the quality," observed Mark's mother, entering the cottage with a basket of eggs in her hand. "You'll excuse him, your ladyship; being ill makes him careless."

Gillian had been rather glad when the woman went away, and she was not so sorry as she might have been that her return took place at that particular moment. Her first essay in being useful did not strike herself as having been particularly successful.

"Your son is too clever for me," she said, laughing. "I'll go away now: but next time I'll try and find something to say to him."

"You'll come back?" he said eagerly.

"You want me to? I've not been very good company."

"The best," he said eagerly. "I'm twice as much alive since you came in. Folks like talking o' what they know: and all I know about is being alive. I'd never die with you listening to me."

"Mr. Harrowtyne up to the farm do say as 'your grace' is the proper thing, and, Mark, you don't call the lady nothing. She won't come back to such manners."

"I can't talk manners, not knowing them. Will you come back, lady?"

"Of course. And Mr. Harrowtyne is wrong. I'm not called anything particular. Shall I bring you a book to read?"

"I don't care what you bring, or if you bring nothing, lady: only come back."

Mark's mother went into some little back kitchen or pantry. She had to get rid of her basket of eggs.

"Though you don't want me to bring anything par-

ticular," said Gillian, "I should like to bring something, if you don't mind. When people are ill they often want something fresh to eat — things they wouldn't care for if they were well. My cook is a very clever person; may I ask her to make something for you?"

"I'd eat anything you brought me, lady, whether I fancied it or not. But I'd be tempted to keep it to look at."

A smile lighted up the young man's face as he spoke, and Gill found the smile very hard to bear. She was not a tearful person, but her voice was so full of tears that she could hardly trust it.

"You are a courtier," she said, "as well as a poet and a philosopher."

CHAPTER XXVII

Perhaps the reader may wonder why, since her reappearance under a new name, so little has been said of Gillian's past life: the reason is that I am trying to tell her story from her own point of view, and she had chosen merely to shut her past life down. To forget at will is beyond our powers, but one can ignore. The prerogative of memory cannot be abdicated; nevertheless we can, if our will be strong enough, refuse to indulge in its exercise: each individual act of remembrance may be smothered in its birth; and this Gillian had chosen to do. She had declared *tabulæ rasæ* concerning the part of her past life which it wounded her to recall. Whether this would in the long run save her pain is another question. To stifle an insufferable memory does not wear it out.

As she walked home after leaving Mark's cottage she was thinking not of herself but of him: again confessing that her first essay in such usefulness as the young clergyman had suggested had not been much of a success. Her own talking had been scanty in quantity and feeble enough in quality: comfort, which was all she thought worth giving, she had been, it seemed, quite incapable of even offering. Her failure had not, however, been so complete as she felt it. She might very easily have irritated Mark's morbid sensitiveness, and easily have simply bored him: whereas he had been the reverse of bored, and her presence had stimulated him without in the least irritating. She had quickened his vitality instead of depressing it, and as life was his one good, a livelier sense of living was not a trivial gift.

Sympathy was all she thought of, and as she had not been able to *show* sympathy, she accused herself of stupidity and failure. But Mark had fully realised her sympathy, and would have shrunk sharply from its verbal expression. At this moment he was longing for her to come again: it was in the hope of her coming sooner that he had agreed to her bringing some cooked dainty; otherwise he would much rather she should return empty-handed.

Of Mr. Andros she did not think at all on her way home, until they happened to meet, or rather until he overtook her. He was riding, and got off his horse to walk beside her.

"Will you come to luncheon to-morrow?" he asked. "My aunt, Lady Oscathorpe, came to me yesterday."

"I was going to ask *you*. Mr. Wentworth called on me, and I told him I should invite you both."

"I will ask him to come too. Didn't you like him?"

"Yes, very much. He is not much like the parsons we used to meet in our travels."

"He is not particularly like parsons in general. Perhaps it may be his fault, but it certainly isn't his misfortune. His virtues are not repulsive."

Gill laughed a little.

"So little so that one scarcely realises he has any."

"Oh he has! But even a layman need not make allowances for them. With most of his cloth I have to keep saying to myself, 'Poor man! he has to.' One cannot help pitying a decently honest person who feels himself bound to appear a great deal better than he is. That's why I like Anthony Trollope's archdeacons much better than our local rectors and rural deans nowadays."

"Please enlighten an ignorant creature — tell me more about Anthony Trollope's archdeacons."

"I was thinking of Dr. Grantly in *Barchester*

Towers. I believe his appearance in print annoyed the clerical world, and that he is now looked back upon as obsolete, by Divine Providence. If so I wish he wasn't. He would have been a pleasant neighbour, though he probably considered Catholics as rather an impertinence in Great Britain. He was, anyway, a gentleman; and he was neither mean, nor vulgar, cowardly, nor ungenerous. He liked to be well off, but he would have liked every one who had to do with him to be well off also. Though he pretended to have no Sunday-schools, all his old women had coals and flannel petticoats and blankets, and all the children buns. Of course he detested poachers, but I am sure he sent his rabbits to the cottagers instead of selling them."

"Does Mr. Wentworth resemble this perfect character?"

"Not exactly. Mr. Wentworth is a young man: but in happier days he might have grown like him."

"I do not think Mr. Wentworth would dislike being well off."

"No; nor would he mind saying so. Meanwhile he's uncommonly nice to our poor people."

"That's what he says you are. . . . He is full of awe, I perceive, of your superior ecclesiastical knowledge."

"I am sorry," laughed Mr. Andros, "that he abuses me behind my back! My ecclesiastical knowledge is only greater than his own. I was reared among books, and many of the most interesting books happen to be about the Church. For a parson I consider a great deal of ignorance on the subject to be a very useful endowment. If I were one I should regard ecclesiastical history as beginning with my own ordination."

The subject did not interest Gillian, but Mr. Andros did. He was not at all an ecclesiastical-looking young man, and had much more the air of a sportsman than

of a student; nor had he any exasperating appearance of preternatural goodness. Gillian did not put him down for a sort of sacristan, but perceived that he was merely a clever man of wide interests. Wholly ignorant of religion herself, she was not so stupid as to be repelled by a sense that he knew all about his own Church and found the knowledge interesting. It gave him, certainly, a sort of remoteness, but remote objects are not always dull or repelling.

"I have been trying to be useful," she told him presently, "and I can't congratulate myself on an immediate or striking success."

She described her visit, and said:

"How could I tell him not to mind dying?"

"One *must* mind: one's body and soul are oneself; and the divorce of them is the horrible penalty we have to pay."

"The end of anything one cares about must be hateful."

Andros hesitated a moment before saying quietly:

"Only it isn't an end: but a terribly sharp corner that only the perfect can really see round."

He spoke diffidently, as many men are wont who have to say things they feel but are usually silent about.

"Look here!" said Gill sturdily, "it's no use pretending. To me it *is* for all intents and purposes the end. This was why I could say nothing to him. One need not mind saying what one *knows*. If I felt about death as you feel I could have said something to help."

"You mean that to you death *is* the end of life?"

"Simply that."

She was not an atheist: she was not a reasoned agnostic: she was nothing.

Andros had much less than no wish to argue: nor could he tell fully what her point of view might be: he could only answer her words.

"It does not," he said simply, "seem to me possible for life to end. God gave it: and His gifts cannot wear out."

Gill perceived plainly how difficult the young man found it even to appear to argue or teach: if his tone had been glib, she would have found it intolerable.

There was nothing in his manner to provoke argument; but his words seemed to her to contain their own answer.

"And the body? Whose gift?" she asked.

"His too; and it must obey a necessity, submit to a punishment. But the punishment is only temporary — that which we call death is only an episode. The tired body rests, and, after its sleep, is awakened by the same voice that made it. . . . I wish," he cried eagerly, "we had not got on this! Of all things we could do, to seem to argue with you is what I most dislike."

Probably he was a man to whom argument with any one was unattractive, as to some argument is the breath of life. Most of his thoughts arrived at decisions, his decisions were beliefs, and his beliefs were convictions; but he had no satisfaction in clashing his personal convictions up against the indecisions of some or the counter-beliefs of others. Nevertheless, when appealed to, he had to say or try to say what he really thought. With Gillian he had a peculiar reluctance to discuss, because he shrank from the discovery that there might be divergence, when he would most have desired community of ideas.

He could not be content with admiration of her mere beauty of face or form, and he shrank from discussions that might somehow reveal her as barring the higher admiration he was earnestly desirous of paying.

Many men with scarcely any religious certainties of their own are repelled by the idea of a young and

beautiful woman having no religious certainties at all; and Andros was a man whose religious beliefs were as strong as himself, and were the backbone of his life, of which he was indeed as little given to talk as the ordinary healthy person is given to talking of the backbone of his body.

Though he knew that she was not a Catholic, and could not therefore be supposed to share his own convictions exactly, it would be a shock to him to be forced on the knowledge that she had not the common belief of Christians. Vague her religious notions might easily be, but to find she had none would be intensely unwelcome.

All this Gillian could only realise in part, because she had not the least suspicion that she was already an important element in his life. That he admired her she could see, and had seen from the first; but she was used to admiration, and attached little weight to it. She did not imagine Philip Andros to be a man likely to be carried off his feet by mere admiration. To her he seemed full of strength and decision, a man of thought rather than of sentiment, perhaps a little hard, as those are liable to appear who give the impression of being guided wholly by principle. It was not his heart that she thought of as hard, but his will, and the hardness she imagined did not repel her. But her belief in it helped to blind her to the truth.

"I do not aspire to argue," she said, smiling, "but any expression of opinion between two people whose opinions are not the same is apt to sound like an argument, for one can't help trying to justify one's point of view."

By tacit agreement they moved their conversation into a lower plane, Gillian telling him of her delight in the beauties of the country where she had almost at haphazard made her home.

Her praise of the fields and woods he loved was most welcome, for his own love of them was lifelong. Nevertheless, her way of speaking of her home deceived him. Lady Avonsbury had tried to persuade him that the young widow need not remain a widow if only he would be more energetic, but this he had never thought. It seemed to him that to go on being a widow was just what she intended. Her very readiness to buy the house he suggested for her in his own neighbourhood had confirmed this belief; to settle down and be her own mistress was, he told himself, her present desire. And now her way of calling Moat her home, as though it were to be her home always, further strengthened his belief. Of himself he did not suppose that she thought at all, except as of a neighbour who might be a pleasant and even intimate friend.

He had not, like a lover in a story-book, immediately become jealous on her mention of Mr. Wentworth's name, nor did he become so on the following day, when both of them were his guests at Andros.

After luncheon the two young men were alone for a few minutes in the dining-room, and Wentworth told his host that he had been that morning to see a young man who was dying.

"He is not a tenant of yours; if he were, he would not live in such a wretched hut. It is his own. Nor is he one of your people. I wasn't poaching."

They both laughed, and the clergyman went on:

"I don't know that he has any religion. Yesterday the duchessa went to see him, and her visit had a wonderful effect; he seems much better to-day, more vigorous. I never saw such a change. He was listless and worn out last time I saw him, as if only his hatred of dying kept him from doing it. To-day he seemed to have taken some receipt for living. Of course, he could talk of nothing but the duchessa."

"She told me of her visit, and thought it had been a failure."

"A failure! If she went to see him every day I believe he would be out of doors in a week, and well again in a month."

When they went into the drawing-room Mr. Wentworth sat down by Lady Oscathorpe, who was inventing a waltz on the piano.

"My talents are worldly," she told him. "If I could compose an oratorio, I would."

Meanwhile the young clergyman seemed to approve of what she could do.

"I have never been to an oratorio," he confessed. "I'm not musical. But I like that."

"Thank you very much."

Andros stood up near Gillian, and told her of the excellent results of her visit to Mark.

"As neither you nor Mr. Wentworth can persuade him to want to die," he said, "it's a good deal that one of you can persuade him not to die at all."

"I am sure he needs no persuasion. But do you think vitality can be infectious? Since so many diseases are, it would seem a fair arrangement."

"I don't know. You can at any rate try. Do go again soon."

"I promised that I would. Yes, I will go to-day, though I really ought to drive to Mavis to return your cousins' call."

"Do both, and I will ride to Mavis, too."

But Gill, somehow, did not care for the idea of going in a smart carriage to see Mark, though she did not explain this.

"No. Your cousins can wait, and Mark can't. I said I would bring him a book, and some undefined something that my cook was to make, and I am sure he will

expect me to go to-day. That was why he agreed to my bringing him anything."

To Andros Court Gillian had driven, and when she went away she offered to take Mr. Wentworth, their way being the same as she supposed. But he had to go, he said, to see a parishioner in the opposite direction.

"He invented that parishioner," declared Lady Oscathorpe when both her nephew's guests were gone. "Because he would have liked to go with the duchessa."

Andros laughed, and told her that she was absurd.

"He's a conscientious young creature, though a parson," persisted his aunt.

"It isn't conscientious to invent parishioners."

"Oh yes, in his position. It tends to impress you, who are of the wrong Church, with his pastoral zeal. But I didn't mean that. He's not at all an interfering young man; and . . ."

"Aunt Prue, you are the most inappropriately named aunt in Europe. If your godparents had known you they would have had you called Inconsequence."

Still Mr. Andros refused to be jealous. Mr. Wentworth had as much right to find the duchessa charming as he had; any young man of taste and discernment must do so.

Lady Oscathorpe went back to the piano and finished inventing her waltz.

"I've thought of a name for it," she called out. "I'm obliged to you. 'Blindman's Buff' is a good name, don't you think."

"It sounds more like a country dance, perhaps."

"You're right for once. It probably will be a country dance."

CHAPTER XXVIII

When Gillian went over to Mavis Thorpe she did not tell Mr. Andros she was going. And as it happened she rode instead of driving, not feeling at all sure that in thus returning a formal call she was not transgressing some unknown British rule of propriety.

To be on the safe side, she apologised to Lady Merle.

"I've only three horses," she explained; "one to ride and two to drive, and one of the two carriage-horses has chosen to fall lame. It was so kind of you to call on me at once that I could not wait till the horse got well. So here I am like this."

Lady Merle was extremely civil, and Gill looked so well in a riding-habit that her cordiality was all the more to her credit. For there were two Miss Merles, both of whom had long thought Mr. Andros the king of men, and they were only third cousins. Mr. Andros himself was present, for he had ridden over to luncheon, a cousinly habit in which he indulged with only a moderate frequency. As it was nearly four o'clock when the Duchessa di Torre Greca reached Mavis, it would have been natural enough if Mr. Andros had ridden home soon after her arrival, but he did not betray any hurry, and Lady Merle had at last to see them go off together.

"One can't help liking her," said Miss Angela.

"Oh, I don't know," said Miss Winifride. "She's really quite a foreigner, without any excuse for it."

"And not even a Catholic," observed Lady Merle, who held that to be Catholic was about all the justifi-

cation of themselves the Latin races had to offer — a justification that she could hardly bring herself to admit as covering the deeper heinousness of being Irish.

"Anyway, she wants to live in England," urged Angela, who was a ruddy brunette. "It wasn't her fault that she was born out of it."

"Oh yes! She has pretty well made up her mind to live in England," said Lady Merle.

"Evidently," agreed Winifride, who was sandy with a pallid skin, the monotony of which was relieved by freckles. She imagined herself to be of the same colouring as Gillian.

The discerning reader will now perhaps discover that Lady Merle had a standing plot to secure Philip Andros for one of his kinswomen, and that those young persons were resolved to help her. But Lady Merle never plotted, and had always left the young man to choose his own degree of cousinly intimacy. If he had happened to fall in love with Angela or Winifride she would have thought it very sensible of him; but young men are rarely sensible, and he had shown no symptoms of the kind. And, though her daughters were united in a sincere belief that no one was at all equal to their cousin Philip, they were by no means also divided by a recollection that he could not possibly marry them both, for they had never indulged any desires that he should marry either. They were excellent girls, devout and useful in their way, and divided their thoughts pretty fairly between the duties of religion and the enjoyments of society, without thinking particularly of husbands. For my part, I do not believe that girls are so much given to thinking of husbands as they are sometimes supposed to be.

Nevertheless Lady Merle and her elder daughter were not delighted at Philip's, to them, obvious admiration for their new neighbour. His wife would be their

cousin, and in that capacity they did not yet desire her. They did not much approve of mixed marriages, and it seemed to them particularly the duty of a Catholic of high position, great wealth, and landed possessions, with the influence such things involve, to abstain from the weakness of letting his feelings run away with him. There were plenty of Catholic wives of ancient name, English blood, and assured position for such a man as Mr. Andros to choose among. They would not have cared for any foreign-bred, foreign-named mistress of Andros Court, and it seemed particularly unfortunate that the duchessa should combine these disadvantages with the more serious one of being a Protestant.

Meanwhile the duchessa and Mr. Andros were riding home with the lady's groom at a distance behind them.

"Angela and Winifride are good girls," said their cousin, "and they would be rather clever if their mother would let them. But she has an idea that it is part of the Catholic religion to be a little stupid."

"I should not say Lady Merle was much inclined to be stupid herself."

"No, her inclination is the other way, and therefore she restrains it. Resistance to temptation is so excellent a principle that she does not think it can ever be carried too far, and she decides to be on the safe side by resisting everything. Like my mother she was a convert, and the Pope is barely Catholic enough for some converts. Isn't Mavis a nice place?"

"Quite delightful. What strikes me here is the wonderful variety in the big houses. Since I came to England I have not seen two alike. One great Italian villa is very much like another."

"Do you like Mavis better than Andros?"

"Yes, in some ways. But no one could compare them. Andros is a palace, and Mavis is like a castle out

of work — for I suppose war is the real business of a castle: and Mavis looks almost as lazy and peaceful as Moat: though my little home is only a sleeping cat, and Mavis is a bland elephant. If I were Lady Merle I should feel a great demand on me for local virtues, but if I were master of Andros I should feel called upon to be of national importance."

"I am glad I have not your morbid sense of duty: I was high sheriff last year, and at the end of the twelve months I had a feeling of having passed the climax of my life — as if henceforward there was not much remaining, but to design my own monument."

"Either you describe yourself badly, or I have guessed your character clumsily."

"It would be very interesting to know your opinion of it."

"No doubt. But not at all easy for me to do my own ideas justice."

He perceived that she did not intend to accept his suggestion, and he was too well-bred to press the matter.

"If my father had lived," he said instead, "I should have gone into Parliament, for I know he meant me to do so. But Andros is a very big estate, and my idea is that I can do most good by managing it myself. There are so many people whose happiness, or at all events whose comfort, can be affected by the care or carelessness of a great landed proprietor."

"Perhaps your father was more ambitious for you than you are for yourself."

"No. I don't think he was ambitious at all, for himself or for me. He did not want me to go into Parliament to shine, but to make myself useful. I am sure he had no desire for me to make a great parliamentary career — to aspire to office or anything of that sort."

"I think if I were a Catholic like you, and the head of a great Catholic house, with wealth and brains, I would wish for such a career; and I *would* aspire to office, and to the highest. I should say, 'Why should not a Catholic be Prime Minister?'"

Andros listened with interest.

"Perhaps such ideas have come into my head: but, as I said, my father died young; and, at two or three and twenty, I became owner of a very large property: that was a plain duty, ready-made, to attend to. The other might not be a duty at all. At all events no one else could do my own work here, and lots of other men could attempt that other work. *Personal* ambition can only be satisfied by doing high things oneself, but the high things may be better done by some one else, and the mere satisfaction of private ambition is not patriotism."

His tone as he said this was quiet and matter-of-fact. There was not the slightest parade of high-mindedness: but Gillian could not fail to see that he was in fact high-minded. He did not boast of being peculiarly alive to the claims of duty, but rather appeared to take it for granted that duty, as each man saw it, must be his object. Nor was he vainglorious in his simple recognition of his own position; his wealth, and birth, and great possessions were merely facts that involved responsibilities.

"You do not take a holiday view of life," she observed, turning her head to him with a little smile.

"I find life pleasant — that's a poor word — I mean interesting. Perpetual holiday would not interest me. A man who must work not to starve has a right to think much of his holiday. As I needn't work in order to eat, I must do so to enjoy myself."

"Well, my life has been mostly holiday, and I must say it has been tedious."

He was determined to ask no inquisitive questions about her life, so he only said:

"A woman's work is not like a man's. Some women choose to make it so, and sometimes they are mistaken."

"To tell the truth, I have never done any work at all."

"You were your father's companion and your husband's. I expect that was what you were meant to do. After all, 'work' is only another word for 'duty' or 'usefulness.'"

"I'm afraid I never had any idea of duty or usefulness. Being my father's only child, I was naturally his chief companion; he was fond of me in his way, and I was fond of him in his way too: there was not much more. When he died I wondered if I might not have given him more . . . but one can only give what one has got."

She meant, of course, that she might have given not liking but love, and Andros knew what she meant. But in his heart he felt that the late Mr. Thesiger had probably received all the affection he had deserved.

"When those nearest to us die," he said, "and can make no further claim for themselves, we are sure to think they claimed more than we rendered, and that we ought to have given more than they claimed."

"As for my husband," she went on, "he thought me perfect, and, as that was already more than I wanted, I did nothing to exaggerate his views still more. As he was content, I let it be. He died too soon to find me out."

"He would not have 'found you out.' Why do you always speak slightingly of yourself? You are fair to other people: but charity begins at home."

"Do I speak slightingly of myself? If I do it must be because I think slightly of myself."

"Do not. It hurts me."

"I see clearly: coldly if you like. And it is as easy to see myself clearly as to see anything else. I have not greatly reverenced or admired the people I have met, and I have wit enough to perceive that of all those people none deserved admiration or respect much less than myself. Life, as I have found it, has been a commonplace, rather common business, and one's life is what one makes it. I cannot tell if I could have made it a finer thing; I certainly never made it fine."

Perhaps she said this partly because she knew that their conversation could not now be much protracted; they were already near the big wrought-iron gate of Moat, and in a few moments would have parted.

Nevertheless Andros had time to say:

"One's life is fine if one is fine oneself."

"Exactly: and one cannot be fine oneself if one's life is poor and trivial."

She brought her horse to a standstill, and her companion felt himself dismissed. He took off his hat and bade her good-bye.

"If you had belittled yourself earlier in our ride," he said smiling, "I should have had time to do more than protest. That is all you let me do at present. . . . My aunt did not know that we should meet this afternoon or she would have charged me with a message. I left her writing to accept your kind invitation."

Gillian had that morning sent up a note to ask Lady Oscathorpe and her nephew to luncheon.

CHAPTER XXIX

As Andros went on his way home he continued to think of the long conversation he had had with Gillian, and still more of Gillian herself. The slighting tone in which she had spoken of herself and of her life jarred upon him. He did not misunderstand it, but neither did he quite understand it. There was nothing in what she had said to suggest that in her life there had been anything to be ashamed of: nevertheless she was ashamed of it. He did not jump to the conclusion that she had been guilty of some great fault; but it hurt him to hear her speak as if her life had been a thing of poor quality, which was exactly what she had meant. Probably she had married without love, and had found out that loveless marriage was ignoble, as he fully believed it must always be.

In this he had only arrived at half the truth: Gillian was not, when she spoke, thinking of any special event in her life, but of her life as a whole, which had never had any purpose or aim, had been dignified by no ideal, however unrealised.

As she dressed for dinner, and afterwards as she sat alone at table, her thoughts also ran on her ride with Mr. Andros, and much more on what had been in her mind while they talked together.

She had married twice, and had in truth been in love with neither of the men she had accepted as a husband. When Eustachio had asked her to be his wife she had hardly thought about him at all. For a long time she had admired his singular beauty, and she knew him to be good-tempered, a pleasant, easy companion, and had

believed him to be also kind, which he was not. She had agreed to marry him partly because she had seen no reason why she should not, and partly because there seemed nothing else for her to do. She liked him very well, and supposed that, as there could be nothing for him to gain by it, he must sincerely wish for her as his wife. In doing what was almost the only thing she could do it had seemed as if she were pleasing him, and she had been very willing to please him.

Then that marriage had turned out to be no marriage at all, and in accepting her terrible fate she had been content to scorn her false husband, by no means glorifying herself. When the old Duca di Torre Greca had entreated her to marry him she had told him plainly the whole story, and he had verified it, ascertaining that her marriage with Eustachio had been in fact invalid. He continued to urge her to accept him as a true husband, and at last she had consented. For him she had had a sincere and deep admiration; he was, she knew, a generous, unselfish, and thoroughly high-minded man; his only weakness being his readiness, his eagerness, to take for his wife a girl forty years younger than himself, who made no pretence of being in love with him. Indeed Gillian had never pretended anything in her life, and was incapable of pretence.

This time she had married entirely to do what was agreeable to a man she respected, and was indeed fond of, though by no means with the fondness of love; nevertheless that marriage also had been one of convenience for herself. She was almost penniless, and altogether homeless. The protection and affection offered to her had been intensely welcome. She had repaid the protection by devoted care, and the affection by affection; but the old duke had truly loved her, and she knew that she had never loved him. She had been all he had hoped for, almost all he had wished for, but not per-

haps quite all; for the old man may have been blind enough to have hoped that in time she would come to love him. There had been no time; in less than two years after their marriage he had died.

"If God had given me time I would have made you care for me," he had said to her. "But old men can only do things slowly. Two years could not be enough!"

"Arrigo," she had said truthfully, "I do care for you."

"Carissima! More than I deserve. But one wants so much more than one deserves."

Even to make him happier she would not pretend to do more than "care"; or rather she could not, for her nature was altogether sincere.

His death had been a genuine sorrow, not only because she had been fond of him, but much more because she knew he would fain have lived, and she would have wished him to have all he desired; and because she would have liked him to have the chance he believed in of making her really love him in time.

He left her reasonable wealth, and a great name and title; he had altogether altered her position in the world. She was thoroughly grateful to him, and his memory was tender. But she knew that she had never loved him. And now she was ashamed of it.

At the time she had had no such shame. In doing what he wished she had thoroughly contented him; and she had been too reasonable to condemn herself in that compliance with his earnest wish had in fact been salvation for herself. In her lifelong wanderings she had never met any married people of whom she had felt that they greatly loved each other. Some of them had apparently disliked each other candidly; but most of them had merely seemed to have settled down into a common-sense acknowledgment of united interests and com-

patible tastes. No transcendental ideal of love in marriage had ever presented itself to her observation.

But now she was ashamed. She knew plainly that she could love Philip Andros; did, she feared, love him already; and love held up a lurid torch to her past life and made it look shabby, mean, and selfish.

At twenty-four she felt old, or rather as if she had been a long time old, and were now, out of time, suddenly becoming indiscreetly young. Philip Andros was at least five years her senior, but to her he seemed younger than herself, for he had kept his life in his hand and hers had been spent on trifles; he had, she suspected, enthusiasm, for all he seemed so calm and restrained. As Malvolio of the soul he thought nobly of life, and she had thought of it ignobly as an inevitable, rather vulgar, necessity. At all events his life had a purpose, and that purpose, she divined, was duty. In this there was no comfort for herself, for duty could not mean to him the love of such a one as she had made of herself.

At all events she could admire his purpose and refrain from interference or spoiling.

On the following day Lady Oscathorpe and her nephew came to luncheon, and Mr. Wentworth was there to meet them.

Lady Oscathorpe had been the youngest daughter of Lord Freshwater, who, as every one knows, married three times, and Lady Muriel Andros was his only child by his first wife, who had been a great heiress. So that Lady Oscathorpe, whose mother had brought the earl no fortune but a large family, was not only much poorer than Philip's mother had been, but was also a great many years younger; in fact, she was not more than half-a-dozen years older than her nephew. She had been precociously mischievous as a child, and she had never outgrown the mischievousness or the pre-

cocity. She was still an *enfant terrible* at five-and-thirty.

On the present occasion she flirted elaborately with Mr. Wentworth, though clergymen were not usually (as she told him with engaging frankness) in her line of fire.

"I don't believe that is a compliment to me," he said.

"Yes, it is. It means that you aren't a bit like a clergyman."

"But it's rather hard of you to say so. A barrister who isn't like a barrister has no chance of being Lord Chancellor. Of course, I propose to be Archbishop of Canterbury."

"Archbishops' wives aren't anything. What's the good of a title that leaves your wife Mrs. Grundy?"

"But my wife wouldn't be Mrs. Grundy: and she might be lady something off her own bat."

As Lady Oscathorpe's flirtation was carried on at the top of her particularly clear voice, these observations were, of course, audible to the duchessa and Mr. Andros. Nevertheless, she had the air of bidding them mind their business, while she attended to her own.

"We're getting on like a house afire," she seemed to declare. "Never mind us. We'll not be a bit in the way."

Philip caught Gillian's eye and smiled, as if begging her to remember that he was not responsible for his aunt's manners.

"Wentworth," he did say, "Lady Oscathorpe would behave better if I had brought her up."

"And if *I* had brought *you* up," retorted the lady, "there would have been no pokers left about for you to swallow. He isn't really a prig," she then informed Mr. Wentworth, this time in a real aside; "he only thinks it becoming in his high position to appear one."

"He plays the part very badly if that is his idea," said Mr. Wentworth. "No one would ever suspect he went in for it."

The young clergyman could see that Lady Oscathorpe was very far from really thinking her nephew a prig; she was, in fact, devoted to him, and her manner admitted it.

"But," she explained, still having to keep to her confidential tone while engaged in eulogy, "so much excellence is a disadvantage to a young man. It gives people wrong ideas. 'Noli me tangere' is only a good motto for a thistle ('Wha daur meddle wi' me?' doesn't it mean?)."

No doubt Mr. Wentworth found Lady Oscathorpe amusing, and he did not scruple to tell her so.

"*Engaging* is the word," she said; "I mean to be engaging."

She glanced rapidly at their companions, and her impertinence almost alarmed, while it certainly diverted Mr. Wentworth. Neither Andros or the duchessa were persons with whom an ordinary person would be likely to take liberties. But then Lady Oscathorpe did not pretend to be ordinary, and never said or did anything at all likely.

"Aren't I volatile?" she inquired abruptly, and to her sincere delight Mr. Wentworth recognised the allusion.

"Is Miss Mowcher your model?" he asked.

"Not in appearance: I only form my manner on her. It is nice of you to read Dickens; so few young persons do."

He was so imperturbably good-tempered that he did not mind even being called a young person.

"Elderly people," he reminded her, "are too apt to conclude that their generation has handed down none of the virtues."

She did not in the least object to being called elderly, being scarcely ten years older than himself, and uncommonly girlish-looking for her age.

All this time Gillian and Philip Andros were much less intimate.

"He is like a crown prince," remarked his aunt. "One would suppose his father's ambassadors had arranged it all."

This observation she conveyed to Mr. Wentworth's ear alone, for which he felt sincerely grateful. Tired of such restraint, however, she continued to converse for any one to hear who chose.

"I never knew any one so like their own portrait," she said, with a glance or two of comparison from her hostess to her hostess's picture. "Is it accident or design?"

"Design on the part of the artist, perhaps."

"His object is generally to flatter. I was in the Academy last year, and every one said that was what had been intended."

"It must have been a bold undertaking."

"Philip, will you speak to Mr. Wentworth; he says my portrait in the Academy was bold."

"It was undoubtedly very like you," said her nephew.

"I shall not appeal to you again for protection. I will deal with Mr. Wentworth myself."

With all her conversation Lady Oscathorpe by no means neglected the pleasures of the table.

"The duchessa has a better cook than Philip," she declared to Mr. Wentworth. "Everything here is perfect. It has always been my ambition to be a young widow, and Lord Oscathorpe knows it well; he thwarts me at every turn. 'Not while I live,' he had the face to tell me."

"I don't wonder he won't oblige you. It wouldn't be worth his while."

"Mr. Wentworth," the lady called out, "is about to propose to me *en secondes noces*."

"It is much more likely," said her nephew, "that you have been proposing to him. If you behave so badly I shall never allow you to come here again without Oscathorpe to keep you in order."

It struck Gill that if Lord Oscathorpe was able to do that he must be a man of exceptional talent. She had never met any one quite so obstreperous as Philip's aunt. It seemed to be her pleasure to make the young clergyman pert to her.

Meanwhile that guileless aunt was flattering herself that sound diplomacy was concealed under her fanfare of absurdity. On the way home she boasted of it.

"My object," she informed her nephew, "was to give you both a lift. I never saw two such helpless people. It wasn't a failure either; for though you didn't mind my flirting with the curate *she* did. And it did you good to see it."

"How? If you will forgive my asking."

"I didn't think even you could be so stupid. 'How?' indeed! My object was, of course, to arouse you to the full consciousness of being in love with her. If I had been a man I could have flirted with her direct, and roused you that way. As it was I could only annoy you by compelling you to see that she was irritated at her parson's goings on with me."

Andros laughed; but he did not tell his aunt that he was already quite aware of being in love. Nor did he allow himself to become at all jealous of Mr. Wentworth.

CHAPTER XXX

Early in October Lady Avonsbury paid her promised visit, and a few nights after her arrival at Moat she and Gillian dined at Andros. Lady Merle and her daughters were also there, and Lord Oscathorpe had joined his wife. There were four other men: Mr. Wentworth, Sir Harold Chichele, a Mr. Chevronel Dexter, and a young Highland chieftain who appeared to be called "Gwen": so at least it seemed to Gillian at first, but later on she discovered that it was "Glen." When the duchessa and her friend arrived the rest of the party was already assembled in the saloon, and Gill let Lady Avonsbury precede her by half a minute, so that for several seconds she stood alone in the doorway, opposite to which was a tall Venetian mirror framed like a picture. In the mirror Gillian's tall figure stood reflected, and Lady Oscathorpe said to Mr. Wentworth:

"Look! the latest and finest of the family portraits."

Lady Merle also heard and stiffened: she had a heartfelt disapproval of Philip's aunt, and saw no necessity for intimacy with parsons. On great estates in England there must be such things; but the thing to do was to patronise them, to send them game for themselves, and coals and blankets for their old women, and ask them to dinner once a year and say grace oneself.

Mr. Wentworth looked in the direction suggested by Lady Oscathorpe's glance, and was in time to see the duchessa's portrait in the big looking-glass. Gillian

he could not yet see, for the door was hidden by a tall screen.

"It is certainly a beautiful portrait," he said, in a much lower tone than Lady Oscathorpe's.

"You are not too fair yourself to admire her?"

"She would not strike me as fair. In some lights her hair and eyes seem very dark."

By this time Andros was welcoming the two ladies. He had never been near the other group, or heard anything his aunt had said. Nor had any one except Wentworth and Lady Merle.

Gillian, Philip thought, had never looked more surprisingly beautiful. Her tall, fine figure was draped in a soft silky gown of a colour very nearly that of her complexion — not white, but of a creamy alabaster tint. She had no jewels in her hair, but round her neck she wore strings of Venetian beads of many colours, and her waist was bound by a kind of girdle of silk exactly the shade of her eyes and hair; and this was fastened by a large buckle of very dark old topazes. If any of the ladies attended to the details of her dress none of the men could do so. They had all of them seen plenty of beautiful women, but no one had ever seen another Gillian.

"What tons of hair!" said Lady Oscathorpe. "But not a hair too much. I must say she knows what to do with it."

Mr. Wentworth was almost irritated. How could any one look at such hair and think of a lady's-maid's share in it?

Gillian, we have seen, felt herself almost old, but she looked as young as any woman could look without seeming girlish.

"It's rather unfair," Lady Oscathorpe told Wentworth. "She must be three or four-and-twenty. It's

being a widow! A *girl* of her age would be considered elderly."

"Consideration and the duchessa," he said, "have nothing to do with each other."

Lady Oscathorpe wished that her nephew could hear him; but her nephew was taking Gillian off to dinner. Lady Merle was not quite pleased with this, for the duchessa's title was "only foreign." She would have thought the Italians very ill-bred if her own English title had been accorded no precedence in Rome or Naples.

At dinner four guests sat on each side of the table; at one end of it Mr. Andros and Gill, at the other Lady Merle and Lord Oscathorpe. Mr. Wentworth was asked to say grace, which Lady Merle thought very unnecessary. There should have been no grace, or the squire should have said it himself.

"She doesn't know," Lady Oscathorpe informed the clergyman, "whether to cross herself with peculiar amplitude, or not to cross herself at all by way of showing it is no religious ceremony, but merely a *convenance*." She then glanced at the other end of the table.

"Don't they look natural?" she asked.

"You've got it upside down," he answered. "According to what you mean she should be where Lady Merle is."

"All in good time," said Lady Oscathorpe, who did not like to have her mistakes pointed out.

In one respect Philip Andros and Gillian did look natural. They suited the immense room, more like one in a palace than the ordinary dining-room of a squire's country house. Andros Court is one of the largest houses in England, and only a very wealthy man could live in it with comfort. The squire of Andros made no

parade of riches, but his establishment suited his house, and he suited it himself. To be wealthy and to spend his wealth was part of his position. Some families have a habit of marrying heiresses, and this habit had been so long continued by the owners of Andros Court that no one noticed it.

Gillian herself rather took her host's fine rooms and belongings for granted than accorded any special attention to them. People were more to her than things, and she had no very keen eye for furniture and appointments, for powdered footmen or splendid plate.

What she did notice was the wonderful likeness, generation after generation, in the tall family portraits. Even that of the first Philip Andros was like his namesake of the present day. Such a persistence of type must mean a corresponding continuity of character.

In spite of Lady Oscathorpe and Lady Avonsbury, it certainly did not enter her mind that she herself would be the ancestress of future generations of the house of Andros.

None of these Andros men, whose pictures she saw, were in a common sense handsome, but all had the same air of peculiar distinction. One would scarcely have supposed they had been for three centuries and a half a race of squires, but rather that they had one after the other been ministers or ambassadors.

Her conversation during dinner was never a *tête-à-tête* with her host; she talked as much to her other neighbour, the young Highland chieftain, as to him, and usually talked to both together, or to Philip and his other neighbour, Lady Avonsbury. Sometimes she and Glen were both talking to Angela Merle, whom he had brought in: when that was the case Lady Avonsbury had a *tête-à-tête* on her own account with Mr. Andros. But Lady Avonsbury spoke in much lower tones

than Lady Oscathorpe affected, and Gillian overheard none of it.

"It is just as I told you it would be," said Lady Avonsbury. "You and she have settled down to study each other for life."

"For me, at any rate, a very interesting study."

"It must be very interesting for both of you; but interminable. And, as you both of you live alone, it gives you each too much time for consideration. Do you think Avonsbury and I would ever have made up our minds if we had thought each other over for years with a mile and a half of park between us?"

"Lord Avonsbury would have made up his."

"Not he. He was much too sensible. He was wise enough not to learn my faults till he had to make the best of them."

"She hasn't got any faults."

"Poor girl! It has come to that already! You are far too modest to offer yourself to sheer perfection. I knew how it would be!"

"Disappointment must be the penalty of omniscience."

As there seemed a gap in the trilateral conversation on the other side of him, Philip turned that way, and Lady Avonsbury's criticisms were suspended.

The laird of Glen, who thought he had done his duty by Angela Merle for the moment, would just as soon that his host had gone on making himself agreeable to his elderly neighbour on the other side. But he was a reasonable young man, and hardly imagined that the duchessa was to be monopolised.

After dinner, however, he came in for more of her attentions.

Lady Oscathorpe was proud of her voice, and proposed singing: and Glen was presently asked to sing also.

He chose a Jacobite ballad, and his manner of singing it, and his really beautiful voice, had an instant effect on Gillian, who had heard very little except professional singing. For that she had never cared much: its mechanical perfection had not stirred her to emotion, and its extreme art had always given her a sense of artificiality.

But with this young Highlander it was quite different. He sang, not from training, but from the heart, and the actual beauty of the sounds was much less moving than their tenderness. He was a very manly man, and had no sentimental airs to put reality upon its guard.

Philip was standing opposite to where Gillian sat, and he wished that he could sing like that. He saw on her face the light that he had been waiting for, and it pained him that another man's voice had lighted it.

"Do sing again," he begged, when the Skye Boat-song was finished, and Glen immediately did as he was asked, choosing the Queen's Maries.

Gillian knew almost nothing of Scottish history, and could not even remember the name of the Queen's fourth Mary.

> "Last nicht the Queen had four Maries,
> This nicht she'll hae but three:
> There was Mary Beaton,
> And Mary Seaton,
> And Mary Carmichael and me."

But her very ignorance concerning Mary Hamilton and her story somehow made the pathos of the death-song more poignant. How could words so simple carry so intense a force of anguish? so many people have had to die! How could this one girl's death-cry, from so far away, have so cruel an appeal?

Gillian had of all people thought herself the least

emotional, but the emotion was now so real that she was not thinking of herself at all. An irrational passion of loyalty and chivalry beat within her for the murdered queen of the murdered Mary who sang with yonder young Highland chieftain's lips. Until then Gillian had scarcely remembered that she also had Scottish blood in her veins: this song gave her a spasm of patriotism that pierced through all her lifelong cosmopolitanism.

"Philip had better look out," whispered Lady Oscathorpe to Mr. Wentworth, with one swift glance from her nephew to Gillian and the singer.

But Mr. Wentworth, who was frankly emotional, and always broke down at the clown's last song in the *Yeomen of the Guard*, was more inclined to frown than smile. Philip himself, when Glen had ended, went over and thanked him.

"The duchessa ought to thank you herself," he said. "Go and be thanked."

But Lady Oscathorpe was about to play a fantasia of her own composing, and looked up with an evident intention of keeping Glen beside her.

Philip found himself next to Gillian.

"I should be very proud if I were Glen," he said to her.

"If I could sing like that," she answered, "I would never talk."

"Then I am glad you do not choose to sing."

"Choose to sing! Do you suppose any one who *could* would not sing as he does?"

When Lady Oscathorpe could get her long-suffering nephew in a corner she said:

"You had better learn the banjo, Philip — it's easy; and I've seen some girls quite dissolved by the Swanee River."

CHAPTER XXXI

When Philip next found himself near Gillian she was sitting by Lady Avonsbury, who said to him:

"We have been talking about your house."

This was not quite accurate, for it was she who had been discussing the house. But Gill was too well-bred to disclaim her half of the discussion.

"The portraits interest me most," she said. "I wonder if all your ancestors really married such beautiful women."

"And they were all heiresses," Lady Avonsbury complained. "That was not quite fair. I was one too, but poor dear Avonsbury had to choose between me and beauty."

"And he chose both," declared Philip.

His old friend noted with amused interest that it was she who got all the compliments. He never brought himself to offer a personal one to Gillian.

"What I cannot quite believe," said the girl, "is that all these fine gentlemen lived quietly here at home; Lady Avonsbury assures me that there was never an Andros in any British ministry, or even an ambassador among them. They look too big for their parts."

"They were content," observed Lady Avonsbury, demurely, "to fulfil the whole Duty of Man."

"Some of them were contented with much less than that," said Lady Oscathorpe, who had sauntered up, and thought she would enliven the conversation. "There were always the Commandments to break without going up to town."

"I wish," her nephew confessed, "that you would go

on talking to Sir Harold. He thinks you excellent company."

"Of course. But he is not worthy of me. Don't be too much impressed by Philip's ancestors," she said to Gillian; "they had long legs, and long noses, but short tempers. All three are heirlooms."

As they drove home together Lady Avonsbury assured herself that her companion's purchase of Moat had been quite as fatal a measure as she had predicted. She did not think that over two months of close neighbourhood had brought Philip and Gillian at all nearer to each other. That they were interested in one another she saw very plainly; but it was, she told herself, "an academic interest," which a plethora of opportunity prevented becoming acute. Why should a man bestir himself when there seemed illimitable time in front of him?

"If they missed each other," she thought, "they might make discoveries. But, always on the spot, how can either of them miss the other?"

What neither she nor Lady Oscathorpe knew was that each of them had made a discovery, and neither had suspected the discovery made by the other.

Philip and Gillian were constantly meeting, and no meeting brought either of them the least understanding of the other's interest.

A night or two after that on which Lady Avonsbury and Gillian had dined at Andros Court, Philip and Glen came to dinner at Moat. His other guests had gone away, and Lady Avonsbury was secretly glad of the departure of his aunt. The elderly lady thought her own indiscretions discreet enough, but Lady Oscathorpe's indiscretions terrified her. We all of us have the advantage of knowing how far we ourselves may choose to go, but rest in much uncertainty as to the

limits of other people's excursions. After dinner Glen sang much more than he had done at Andros, and the effect did not stale on Gillian, though she was more on her guard against it.

"Your singing, Glen," declared Lady Avonsbury, "makes me remember that my mother was a Scot. I could wear a kilt and Clanranald tartan if I chose."

Lady Avonsbury did not fully approve of the effect produced on Gillian by the young Highlander's ballads, and was willing to disperse the atmosphere created by them.

On the following day she also went away, and Gillian walked off to see Mark, whom she had seen now many times, but not once during her old friend's visit. Lady Avonsbury never wrote letters, apparently, though she received a great many, and sent off innumerable telegrams.

"I never learned to spell," she declared, "and in telegrams it doesn't matter. Don't let us do anything particular, or we shall have no time to talk."

Gillian had therefore had very little time to herself whilst her guest remained, and Mark had been neglected. She found him worse again, back in bed, and not at all grateful for the books and delicacies she had sent instead of herself.

"I don't want them, lady, except when they make you come to bring them," he said, fixing his great gaunt eyes upon her hungrily. "When you come I can hardly believe I've got to die."

She found it hard to say anything.

"Mark, I've got to die too."

"In fifty or sixty years! And you wouldn't mind much if it was now. *I do.*"

"Well, I'm here now," she said. "Scold me for not being able to come lately, and get it over."

She laughed a little, and he grew more cheerful.

"Mr. Wentworth's been — many times; and he's welcome. He's given over trying to do his duty, and talks to me about you. He told me about the party at Andros Court, and how you were the most splendid of them all."

"That I wasn't! Some of the fine ladies were covered with diamonds."

"Diamonds! Mr. Wentworth had more sense than to look at diamonds."

"Mark," she said, laughing again, "you're the only person who pays me compliments."

"Is it bad manners?" he asked quickly. "I don't know anything about them. I just say what I think."

What a pity Philip did not feel free to do the same — if only Gill knew it!

"I've often thanked the sun for shining bright of a winter's morning," poor Mark went on. "It did not seem any harm to me to thank you the same. If it's rude, forgive me, lady."

"Indeed there is nothing to forgive. . . . Have you really been worse lately?"

"I knew more about it, that's all. When you've been here, I pay no attention to my dying."

He talked of his dying almost savagely.

"Mark," she said quietly, "it's not your own trouble only: you speak as if no one had any share in it."

"No one has. . . . Oh, you mean mother. She's been cheerful enough all these years since father died: she'll talk of us both, when I'm done, as if we had been angels — that's all."

This made Gill almost angry, none the less because there was a hard truth in it.

"Shall *you* care?" he demanded suddenly, sitting up on his elbow, and leaning forward towards her.

"It is a shame to ask that. You know I would care. But I can *do* nothing: that is what almost makes me

hate coming. I can only sit here and say nothing worth saying; and what difference would a million words make?"

"Yes, you *can* do something."

"Tell me what it is, and I will do it."

His dark, but burning eyes were fastened upon her, and he shook as he said:

"Order me to live."

"Order you!"

"Yes. Do you think I could disobey you? I would obey you and come back if I were already dead, if I could hear you there. I'm not dead yet. Order me to live, and I shall live."

His voice trembled, and his face changed from its deathly pallor to a faint flush, and then paled again.

"Do it!" he cried. "I hated this dying all along: and now — oh now, you know!"

He could not have told her more plainly that he was fain to live to go on seeing her. He made no effort to keep back the adoration that flamed in his eyes. Nevertheless she knew that he was not in love with her in the common phrase, in any common way. It was not her rank, or her high title, that held her quite above such common love from him, but herself. And with all his unconcealed adoration he made her feel this. She could not be herself and be offended with him. He was no more presuming than the Zoroastrian who adores the sun: the sun-worshipper asks no love of the sun, but light and life; nor did he dream of asking love from her, or leave to love her, only life and light, that she held for him in her hands.

Of herself, in truth, Gillian was not thinking at all: she was not disconcerted by an awkward situation, nor resenting an impertinence. She was thinking of him, and he, who seemed only to be thinking of himself, was

really beyond thought of himself, in that his own identity was overpowered by hers.

What troubled her was something deeper than the mere resentment a girl such as she was might have felt at the abuse of her kindness and friendship. She had no such sense of abuse. Of her rank and of the impassable social gulf between them she did not think any more than he did: what kept her silent was the realisation that he was not making too little of her but too much. It was, she knew, not love but worship that was being poured out passionately at her feet. His offering did not seem to her a vulgar insolence, but something terrible, the acceptance of which by her would be profane.

Of ordinary religion she was pitifully ignorant as yet, but little as she had ever thought about God she could not see herself lifted on to a divine pedestal without horror.

She met his fierce eyes frankly, not pretending to ignore their meaning: but to answer their appeal was beyond her.

"You will not?" he urged. "You will not say 'I order you to live,' though you promised you would do what I told you you could do."

She was as pale as he was, and she too trembled; for in his voice was a bitter cry for life, as if she could give it to him, and simply would not.

Slowly she bent her face into her hands and prayed — almost the first real prayer she had ever made.

"Give him life, for I cannot. If some one must die, let me die instead!"

He heard no whisper, but he was suspicious.

"What are you doing?" he asked sharply: and she told him — because with his devouring eyes upon her she could not help herself.

"If He does what you put into His head," the young man cried fiercely, "He will cheat me."

He, who had only cared for life for the sheer sake of being alive, now would not care for it at all if it held no hope of seeing her.

She reached out her hand and laid it on his.

"Mark," she said, "I cannot order you. But between real friends no orders are given. It is enough to ask. And it should be enough, between you and me, if I ask you to do what you can to live."

It was not what he wanted. It was a mere natural appeal to himself, and he had longed, superstitiously almost, for a command, which, in some way more than natural, he must, he believed, obey. He had never been superstitious before till now; but she seemed to him altogether above ordinary women, and he had never cared for or even liked women: she had, he felt, authority over him, and he yearned to see her exercise it.

But her hand lay on his, and she had spoken of herself and him as friends: must he not be content, even though she would not bid him to take life as her own gift?

CHAPTER XXXII

As Gillian walked home she thought almost entirely of the young man she had just left. She knew that she must go and see him soon again, perhaps to-morrow: and yet, now, she half dreaded going. She could not regard him with the sort of patronising interest that most women in her situation would have felt for a dying peasant in her neighbourhood: rank in life was nothing to her, as it was nothing to him; it was life itself that mattered. And to be asked to bestow life, to seem to refuse the bestowal out of a verbal scruple, was nearly intolerable. Might he, perhaps, be right? Could one vitalism have such effect upon another? She knew nothing of occult biology, and disliked the idea of anything occult; nevertheless she might be simply ignorant of a natural law, rare in operation because the conditions of its operation must be rare. How could she be easy even under a groundless suspicion that a human being, who thirsted for continued life, should be denied what he longed for by her reluctance to speak a short word?

Nevertheless she could not bring herself to say the word.

The whole interview with Mark had bristled with passion, though not the common passion of love: and Gillian's life had never once, till now, been touched by even the ragged fringe of passion.

She shrank, almost, from recalling Mark's words and look, his fierce tones, like upbraiding, his angry dis-

appointment; and yet she had been learning. She knew that he had revealed something to her, and that the revelation, however troubling in itself, had added something to herself, and to her own share of life.

There was, she abruptly realised, such a thing as worship; and instinctively as she had shrunk from being made the object of worship, she could not feel that the thing itself was anything but noble. She could not doubt its reality, even in Mark, though its application to herself, who knew herself so well, had been worse than disconcerting.

This interview with him had been intensely trying and difficult, as no other meeting with him had been; and she was even now dreading any possible recurrence of what had troubled her; but she knew that Mark had not been rendered meaner or less worthy; on the contrary, he had elevated himself into something higher, more important. His misplaced, blind, and unreasoned adoration had at all events ennobled him.

If utterly mistaken worship could do that, how great must worship be, how real!

She could not, whoever else might, smile away reality. To her his mistake could not appear a mere blundering stupidity. She would not, if she could help it, be worshipped; because her frank estimate of herself bade her shrink from such acceptance as dishonesty. But she envied him the faculty.

And, after all, might he not, in some fashion beyond her present comprehension, be "honouring the power in the form"? Might he not be standing on a higher plane of conception than hers, and be inarticulately stammering a truth she had never been great enough to suspect?

Odd things have been worshipped, but it must have been finer to feel the hunger of worship for something than to have no such hunger at all. Which must be

lower, the impulse-driven devotee who has seen a God in the sun or in the great waters, in the spring that brings back life, or in the thunder that speaks from heaven, or he who has never discerned any need of a God anywhere, or felt the fire of adoration burn away gross and dull absorption in mere self?

Worship must be the apprehension of something above self; and misplace it where one may, it must always be an inestimable advance — a recognition of the existence of Godness somewhere.

She felt sure that such a man as Philip Andros must have juster conceptions of the object of adoration than poor Mark; but the gentleman, who was not ignorant, was silenced by convention from speaking of worship and its objective; and the peasant, who knew, and cared, nothing of conventions, had at least said out what was in him. And anything real was a gift to her. Hitherto life had been to her but a poorly-conceived, ill-carried-out playing, in which her own part had been sorry rather than tragic.

Why could not Philip talk to her as Mark talked? She was now half-irritated to recall his measured abstentions, his courteous silences, his perpetual hold upon himself.

His speech touched commonly but the smooth surface of things, as if he felt it to be under-bred to probe into realities underneath. Why should he be shy of differing from her, or her differing from him, as if polite conversation implied silence concerning anything strongly significant?

She had tried to tell him, not boastingly but frankly, that she was without faith, and he had scarcely had a word to say of his own, though he cared more, she knew instinctively, for that ancient faith than for anything else.

He mistook, she told herself, deference for respect, as

if he imagined that respect would be infringed by bold correction of her ignorances and misconceptions.

From Philip her thought ran back to Mark, and beyond him to that which he had forced her to see.

Worship, she learned from Mark, was a real thing, and any real thing existing must have a real object. There must be something deserving of Mark's worship, though she herself were never so unworthy. She had divined much more than the young man had merely said or looked; his words had been fierce but almost stammering; an effort at expression, desperate rather than successful; and his looks, half savagely intense as they were, had been also half ashamed, as though he durst not look the whole of what he felt. Nevertheless he had made an atmosphere in which his hearer had never breathed before, an atmosphere "rare" in both senses. Her consciousness of personal unworthiness had not been mock-modest but impersonal and sincere; and she suspected that, not only was she herself undeserving of such worship, but that no woman could be worthy of it — no human being. But the worship was real, and there must be a real object of it somewhere above humanity, since in humanity no adequate objective could be imagined.

It was, it may appear, an odd fashion of arriving at the idea of God, but there are many ways, as various as men and the needs of man. The perfect may rise to the Divine Idea perfectly, the imperfect by a crooked ladder, oddly fashioned of an incongruous tree.

Gill envied Mark his faculty of worship, but not that she might offer her own to the man whom she was afraid of loving, whom she feared she could not help loving.

Once, as she walked home from Mark's cottage, she had been overtaken by Philip Andros; to-day she was overtaken by his chaplain. He had but yesterday re-

turned from his holiday: that was why she had not met him at Andros Court on the evening she dined there. But he had called upon her once before he went away, though she had been out.

"Good afternoon, duchessa," he said now; "may I introduce myself? I am Father Pope."

"I am sorry that I was out when you were so kind as to call upon me."

"And then I went off on my holiday. I have been in Italy. I wish I could talk Italian better. I haven't the gift of tongues, but when I'm abroad I behave as if I had, and always insist on talking the language of the place, whether I know it or not."

"You had better practise Italian by talking it to me, and I will give you lessons if you like."

"Do you mean it? Then I will accept your offer gratefully. I hope you like your new home; it must seem a bit tame here after Italy."

"I want to be tame," she said, laughing, "and I like my new home very much."

"Do you like the people?"

"You mean the 'poor' people? Yes, I do. They are so friendly."

"So they are. But they are not interesting in the way that Celtic or Latin people are. I find these folks good too, but their goodness is different from that of our Irish people. All real goodness is from above, of course, but there is something *visibly* supernatural about the goodness of the Irish."

"I am afraid," said Gill, again laughing a little, "that I am not an expert in goodness."

The priest did not quite know what she meant, and immediately said so. He was a very direct person, and never beat about a bush, but gave it, so to speak, one good thump on the top, to see if there was anything in it to fly out.

"I simply meant what I said. I don't know much about different sorts of goodness."

"Come!" he said, "you must have seen lots of it — or you've been very unlucky. I don't much believe in optimism, for it generally consists in calling black white, but there's a decent lot of white in the world, for, after all, God made it, and it takes more than six thousand years to spoil His work out and out. And among all the goodness there is plenty of variety. Cardinal Manning is a good man, and so is Mr. Gladstone, and so is that carter we just passed — James Brand his name is — but their goodness is different."

"No doubt they are different."

"It's not that only. Every two men are different; but the English sort of goodness is different from the Irish."

"And Englishmen are different from Irishmen."

"I know. The English are respectable (when not disreputable). The Irish are supernatural — even when they're a bit inclined to be disreputable. The ignorant classes are the least likely to be good in England; they've the least to lose by being bad. The 'ignorant' in Ireland are often the best."

"They've the most to gain by being good, you mean."

"No, I didn't mean that," said the priest, laughing cheerily. "It's true; but it's not what they think about."

"What do they think about?"

"God," answered Father Pope decisively. "The best way to convert an English drunkard is to convince him, if you can, how much better off he'd be if he'd keep the money he spends on drink for clothes, and food, and for itself — for the glory and goodness of having a pound or two in the cupboard. You'd never convert an Irish drunkard that way. What may move *him* is the fear of God's hating him."

"Does God hate people?"

Father Pope glanced sharply at her.

"So you've thought," he observed coolly.

"Not much on these matters."

"What else have you had to think of, more important?"

Certainly the priest's tone with the young duchessa could not be accused of erring on the side of smoothness.

"You said you were not an optimist. Do you imagine people usually occupy their minds with the most important considerations?"

"I know they *don't*. Exactly those who have the most leisure for thought either don't think at all, or think of what they'd better let alone. If a poor wretch, whose whole life is a desperate struggle for bread — not for himself only, but for his wife and the children he has called into a world that never invited them — is too dazed and weary for thought, there's excuse for him; but for the idle what excuse is there?"

"You don't approve of the rich?"

"Did I say the rich? I said the 'idle.' There are hundreds of thousands of rich people here in England alone who work harder for good than any poor mechanic works for bread. Mr. Andros here, for instance."

"Mr. Andros is a man, I'm a woman, Father Pope; which apparently was a divine ordinance."

"Oh, you're taking it personally! No doubt it was God's ordinance you should be a woman; as it was His ordinance that St. Catherine of Siena and St. Theresa should be women. But He didn't insist on their being idle; and they weren't."

"I know them chiefly by their pictures. But you don't expect all women to be nuns."

"No. Nor do I want you to be a nun: but you needn't be idle."

"What can I do?"

"You can think of the things you say you never have thought of. I'm not asking you to be a fussy good-worker. There are over many such — who can't believe God's Providence is sufficient. The modern philanthropy is mostly conducted on the principle that God's charity is a sleepy affair, and leaves a good deal of deficiency. I don't find fault with what you call your idleness, duchessa, but with your failure to make use of it. According to Protestant English notions nuns are idle creatures, but they are ten times more really useful than all the philanthropic committees."

"So after all you do want me to be a nun."

"Come," he said again, "you can argue better than that, I know already. Some idle folk are just fools, and you're no fool. But a nun's time is spent (when it is not spent on the sick and sorrowful) in contemplation."

"Of themselves?"

"Do yourself more justice, duchessa. That flat talk is not for you. The disappointed woman of the world, with her mouth full of Dead Sea fruit, it is she who contemplates herself, and no one accuses her of it. The woman of the cloister looks beyond the trivial network of self to that which makes self worth caring for — because He cares."

Gill perceived that when the priest talked hurriedly he thought more hurriedly still; so that instead of his words outrunning his thought, as is common with rapid speakers, his thoughts outran his speech, and escaped without full and deliberated expression.

His last word or two now interested her because, in a fashion he could not know of, they illustrated a feeling in herself of which she had not been conscious till she heard them. She realised that somehow she had become more worthy of interest to herself since Mark

had shown how much he cared. The most ordinary modesty must repudiate worship, but no decent person can be offered worship and not grow less unfit for it.

"God," the priest continued in his odd, hasty manner, whose sincerity was not rendered less apparent by it, "God has a right to worship; the world says it hasn't time. The contemplative says, 'Time is His as well as eternity; our share of it He shall have. If there isn't time in the world we will sit apart from it.' There's no harm in sitting. Mary was sitting at our Lord's feet when He praised; it was Martha who was running about — like the philanthropists now."

"You don't seem fond of philanthropists."

"I have my faults. God puts up with them — I mean the philanthropists; He is strong and patient; but even He is provoked seven times a day."

"But aren't your nuns philanthropists — Sisters of Charity, for instance?"

"Don't go taking away their character! The Church's unchanging charity isn't more than second cousin of your modern philanthropy."

"Well, you were praising contemplation. Sisters of Charity are not contemplatives. You are not a contemplative, but a secular priest."

"Secular priests are not specialists in contemplation; they are general practitioners; but a general practitioner has to know it all. And *every* nun is a contemplative, though not all in the same degree. The best Sister of Charity is the one who makes the best meditation — mind you, not necessarily the best *formal* meditation; the Sister of Charity who never meditated at all might as well be on a pious baby-farming committee."

"What is 'meditation'?"

"Thinking about God."

For a moment they were both silent, then the priest turned with a sort of pounce upon her.

"Why didn't you say what you were going to say?" he asked with a queer, good-natured sharpness.

"I wasn't going to say it."

Father Pope laughed aloud.

"A bull!" he cried triumphantly. "And you not an Irishwoman!"

But he did not press her to say what she declared she had not meant to say. He knew what was in her mind — that she had never thought about God.

CHAPTER XXXIII

Two or three weeks after this Gillian accepted an invitation from Lady Avonsbury to go and stay a fortnight with her.

At first she had had an odd scruple as to whether she ought to go quite away from the possibility of seeing Mark for so long a time. Having refused to do the thing he had prayed of her, she felt almost morbidly sensitive as to the obligation of doing all else for him that she could.

But he was much better, though it was now November, and one might have expected the decay of autumn to have made him worse.

"You see I am up," he said, as she entered the cottage. "I was out this morning; it was grand to see the marsh again, and the fog with the sun sticking in it."

He laughed himself, and she was glad to find him in a humour that let her laugh too.

"In ten days," she said, "I am going away."

He turned roughly upon her.

"For good?"

"I hope not for much bad," she answered, choosing to laugh again; "to stay for two weeks with a friend."

"Oh," he said, "you frightened me. I thought perhaps you'd grown tired of the country and were going off to London to live."

"I almost refused to go even for a fortnight," she told him simply, "because I was afraid you would miss me."

"Miss you! Of course. But you really thought twice about going — for my sake?"

"Yes."

He leant against the very high chimney, and smiled with a sweetness she had hardly guessed his fine but very rugged face could carry.

"You see, I would not do what you asked me that day," she said, "and I feel bound to do everything else I can."

"And you aren't bound to do anything."

"Yes, I am."

"By what?"

"By myself."

"You *are* grand!" he cried, as if boasting of her.

"Look," he went on, "see how I have kept my word. I have been up three hours, and I'm not tired yet. The doctor says I've flummoxed him. By all rights he thinks, I can see, that I should be dead by now. But he knows it isn't him, nor yet his stuff, though I take it all. What it is he can't tell; and you may be sure he won't be told. . . . Don't you go and think that I shall break my word behind your back. When you come home I shall be walking about, though it will be against my own interest."

"Against your own interest to be out in the fields and watching the sun sticking!"

"Laugh away, lady! Of course it's against my interest. I'm not fool enough to fancy you can go on coming to see me when I'm well and about."

"We shan't be far apart."

"No, that's it. Besides, you walk a good bit, and I shall always have the *chance* of seeing you."

As she was going away she went very often to see him during those last days, and each time she found him better, stronger, and more full of physical vitality. When she first saw him his vitality had been a mere wilful assertion of the spirit. As he grew stronger he

grew more gentle, till it became hard at times to remember how rough he had been.

One day his mother followed Gill out and walked as far as the little bridge, thanking her.

"It's all you, my lady; no doctor could ha' saved him. The doctor said as much, he did. And you can partly see now what my lad really is in himself. He was always a quiet, mild creature, like most of the big 'uns. It's the little dogs as barks and snaps, isn't it? When he was dying he was that rough, and raging! I couldn't abide to hear how he spoke up so hard and sharp-like, even to you, as was so good coming to see him; that's why I mostly went off and left him alone to you; it didn't seem fit as I should hear him."

"I never minded, Mrs. Herrick; he wasn't angry with me, or you either: he was only angry about dying. Yes, I can see that he is as you say, gentle. To-day he talked of working again before Christmas; but he mustn't be in a hurry."

"And he's lost his job too. It won't be so easy for him to get anything all at once."

"Do you think he would work for me if I found him anything to do at Moat?"

Oddly enough, his mother did not at once express her certainty that he would be delighted. When next Gillian saw Mark himself he happened again to talk of working, and she asked if he would like to take charge of the glass-houses at Moat.

"Not if you made the job on purpose for me," he answered.

"But I shouldn't. There is plenty of work to do."

"But if some one does it now, I shouldn't care about taking his meat away from him."

"No one does it now. The old gardener doesn't care about the glass-houses, and I do."

"I should like well the chance of seeing your Grace so often," he said simply, "but I can't fancy being paid by you."

On the following day she went away, and Mark was left alone; but he kept his word in her absence, and continued to grow stronger. He lost another friend and visitor during part of the time, for Mr. Wentworth was also invited by Lady Avonsbury, who had professed to discover a cousin-ship.

"That's the result of a great-grandfather with seventeen children," she said. "I am never safe from relations. If I fell into a geyser in Iceland I should probably find a cousin half-way down."

"And should you immediately invite him to come and stay at Avonminster?"

"I don't ask them all; but I like Alured Wentworth, and so do you."

What surprised Gillian a little was that Mr. Andros was not invited too. When she arrived at Avonminster her hostess explained it.

"This isn't a shooting party, you see; and Philip is coming to shoot next month. I haven't any shooting men this time; you'll see them all by-and-by. And Alured Wentworth will explain them to you."

"That man," he told Gillian at dinner, gently turning the end of a knife towards a complacent person in an eyeglass on the other side of the table, "is Mr. Tarf, whose object in life is to look exactly like his father, Lord Clontarf. They are not really the same age, but they both pretend to be. Mr. Tarf is on the point of becoming Chancellor of the Exchequer, and you can see him eyeing us all to find something to tax about us."

"He is at this moment considering my hair. I hope the tax won't be prohibitive."

"It is no use his taxing your hair, because no one else has the same. The bishop, who took in Lady

Avonsbury, is supposed not to believe in anything particular: that used to be considered very suitable for deans, but it's rather original in a bishop."

Nothing, however, could look more episcopal than the Bishop of Dulchester, and Gillian's credulity was over-taxed, and she said so.

"He looks as if he *was* the Church," she protested.

"Oh yes. And he is all for the Church as a fine plausible machine for civilisation and enlightenment. He is far from condoning free-thought among the laity. Christianity he regards as a growth, the heir of Greek culture and Roman statecraft. Nobody knows whether he believes there was ever such a person as its Founder. His enemies assume that he thinks St. Paul invented Him."

Gillian did not know that her friend was doggedly High Church, for the theological side of him was not much obtruded on the public, nor was she aware that there is nothing a High Churchman will not say against a bishop.

"That," he informed her, indicating by a glance a young man at the lower corner of the table on the other side, "is Lionel Thorne: he is not a bishop, but his father was, and so he turned Roman Catholic, and has just founded a confraternity for the conversion of primates: it is said to make their Graces of Canterbury and York very uneasy."

"The Bishop of Dulchester does not seem much disturbed."

"Oh no! His theory on prayer makes him quite at ease: besides, Lionel's sodality is not aimed at mere bishops — he hasn't faith enough, he confesses. He is a little bitter, you know, for his father left all his money to the second son, who is editor of the *Agnosco*. But Lionel does very well with his plays, and isn't badly off. His *Angel in the Cupboard* was acted a hundred and eleven nights running before a man in

the stage-box discovered that there was nothing in the cupboard. It's rather fine being here — these people are all celebrities. I'm glad great-great-grandpapa had seventeen children."

Innocent young man! Old Lord Diddlem might have had fourscore children, and Mr. Wentworth have never been bidden to his third cousin once removed's interesting party but for that lady's scheming. She was determined that Philip Andros should miss his neighbour at Moat, and thought it likely he would miss her all the more if he knew his other neighbour at the rectory was basking in her smiles.

Lady Avonsbury did not at all wish Gillian to marry Mr. Wentworth, and she did rather want her to marry Philip; but if that deliberate young man did not choose to "hurry up," the elderly lady thought it merely dog-in-the-mangerism that the beautiful duchessa should be kept hidden away just outside his park, for him to study at his leisure.

Mr. Wentworth was not the only man at Avonminster, and, though the Bishop of Dulchester had one wife alive and two in heaven, Mr. Tarf was a bachelor, and Lionel Thorne was in the same condemnation. If either of them became alive to Gillian's peculiar attraction Philip Andros would only have himself to thank — and a refusal would be medicinal for either of them. If Gill missed Philip she betrayed no sign of it; and her perfect willingness to talk about him when Lady Avonsbury chose him as a subject did not strike that lady as satisfactory. She was equally ready to discuss Mr. Tarf and Mr. Thorne, and cheerfully agreed with her friend's encomiums on Alured Wentworth. That young gentleman, however, was not to be drawn into discussion of the duchessa.

"She is above all argument," he declared, "and incapable of proof, like an axiom."

"Axioms are things in Euclid, aren't they? I never heard they were good-looking."

"Good-looking! The Duchess of Torre Greca is not good-looking: she is the Duchess of Torre Greca."

Lady Avonsbury had to leave it there. Mr. Wentworth, she told herself, was hobbled by prudence; he was determined to know his place, and stood by with an impregnable common sense that made his hostess long to shake him. If everybody conspired to recognise Gillian as a goddess she might be sure of worshippers, but Lady Avonsbury thought an unshared pedestal dull at her young friend's time of life.

Mr. Tarf, however, was quite innocent of making any lady a goddess. Ladies appeared to him simply female gentlemen, with possibilities of suffering taxation, without representation, that gave them a certain piquancy. But the duchessa's property, he imagined, must be chiefly in Italy, and lacking in economic interest.

Lionel Thorne secretly wished all women to take the veil, and all men except himself to become monks, while he wrote plays about them. Marriage, he suspected, was on its last legs, and universal monachism the real predestined way out of the difficulties of overpopulation. Probably the world was nearly played out; very few mottoes for popes remained in St. Malachi's prophecy, and not many blank spaces for papal effigies were still unfilled at St. Paul's outside the walls. He, moreover, was at times almost inclined to fancy that the young duchessa was bored by him; he knew himself to be over-sensitive, but still the morbid suspicion had attacked him more than once.

Nobody at Avonminster proposed to Gillian; and she went back to Moat, and Mr. Tarf and Mr. Thorne went back to London, without so much as suspecting that Lady Avonsbury had thought it a good idea.

CHAPTER XXXIV

Mr. Thorne had almost suspected Gill of being bored by him, and in reality the whole party had bored her a little. It had, at all events, not interested her, and she had scarcely felt herself to belong to it. At home, walking through the placid Rentshire fields, she had felt herself altogether English, with an almost devout sense of return from lifelong exile. But among the fine folk at Avonminster she had continually been conscious of being to all intents and purposes a foreigner. Their talk was mainly about people, and of the people discussed she knew nothing; neither did she care for the points of view. The glimpses she obtained of contemporary society tended to revive in her the feeling, lately discarded, that life was a trivial, half-dull, and restlessly superficial pursuit.

She was glad to get back to Moat, to be fully her own mistress; and, far from finding its quietness lonely, the very trees and lanes met her again as better and more sympathetic companions than the professionally brilliant company at Avonminster.

Father Pope called upon her the day after her return, and began by asking if she minded coming back to her empty house after a fortnight in one so famous for its parties as Lady Avonsbury's.

"My house is not empty," she retorted, laughing. "You are not at all flattering. *I'm* here."

"Well done, duchessa! I like some one who has the sense to prefer her own society to the jostle of a crowd like that."

"That's better. Well, I don't mind what you call

my own society: but it isn't that, exactly. My company here consists of books, and the things there are to do, and the *place*."

"And you really do not find it lonely here?"

"Not a bit. Do you?"

"I? No. But I'm an old man, and you're a young woman. I don't know that I should choose to live by myself in a featureless rural neighbourhood if I *had* to choose it. I'm here because the bishop sends me; and there's more work than you'd think."

"Mind you," said Gill, "I'm really fond of Lady Avonsbury. If she had been alone I should have liked it very much."

She then told him how "foreign" she had felt herself among her fellow-guests.

"They were uncommonly civil; and showed it by taking it for granted that I knew every one they knew. I didn't wish to scandalise them, but I had to do it. You see, I knew scarcely any one."

Father Pope was amused.

"That's society," he declared. "What a waste of time!"

"The Bishop of Dulchester was there," he added. "He is reckoned a clever man. What did you think of him?"

"I had no occasion to think about him; he did it all himself. He talked to me, however, and told me that free opinion was alert in Italy. But he did not seem to admire the 'Latin mind'; he finds it impatient. In England thought, it seems, is slow."

"Uncommon," said Father Pope, rubbing his hands.

"But sure," added Gill, imitating the urbane weightiness of the episcopal manner rather neatly. "The Saxon mind advances gingerly (I am afraid that was not the word) to impregnable conclusions. The Latin mind leaps at conclusions and overreaches them. Su-

perstition, it appears, is the trapping of a dummy (perhaps dummy was not the word either); and though there's nothing indelicate in stripping the trappings off, a wiser enlightenment would prepare a genuine alternative first. No explosions of obsolete belief, I understand, will ever leave England without a working religion."

"Nothing explodes in England," protested Father Pope, "the powder's been wet these three hundred years and more."

"The bishop," continued Gill, "was impressed by my strength of character in not having joined my husband's Church."

"He was, was he?" ejaculated the priest with less urbanity.

"Yes. I was, he assured me, young, and the young are excusably impressed by what is at once ancient and grandiose. Externals must always count, and the Latin Church has never forgotten how to exploit the prerogatives of age and splendour. Ideas are not visible, and can appeal only to the idealist, whereas pomp and circumstance are apt to dazzle, even where they do not entirely blind, the merely indifferent spectator."

"So he took it for granted you were indifferent! I thought his lordship was more complimentary."

"Ah, but indifference is not so bad; far better, because more logical, than false enthusiasm. A stage of indifference is the inevitable succession in the line of evolution. First comes the new idea, or revelation, as its votaries count it; really vague, but impatiently formulated for the sake of more definite and swift promulgation, nevertheless a genuine ethical motion and advance; then the headlong descent into miracle, as a wider and more brutal public is admitted, wherein the

ethical discovery is smothered, and its resultant forces of civilisation are weakened as they spread; next misgiving, honest and inevitable — with the chill that is called indifference — then, then —"

"Then the Bishop of Dulchester," suggested Father Pope. "God save us all! Yet that man really has brains; how on earth can his ignorance be considered invincible?"

"His ignorance! I quite understood that he knew everything — only it's better not to tell. He was, I fancied, disappointed on the whole to find he had so little to put me on my guard against; the youthful follies of over-belief he found lacking."

Father Pope again rubbed his hands, but this time not with complacency. He was, however, determined not to ask questions.

Gill went on, not so much because the topic was specially interesting to her, but because her faculty of imitation, not commonly exercised, seemed to entertain her visitor.

"His lordship, I perceived, plumes himself on his universal sympathy. All forms of belief appeal to him, but what he instanced were apparently forms or stages of unbelief. I did not gather that the persecuted Catholics of Italy or France deserve much compassion. Your Nonconformists here in England he eulogised for their courage in disavowing many tenets of older faith, but their 'narrowness' in cleaving to some others surprised him."

"Well, well! What a pity they haven't another Newman in their Church getting ready to come into ours — he would make the Bishop of Dulchester skip in the meanwhile."

"If Moses and the prophets can't make him skip," suggested Gill, who knew his lordship, "I doubt if any one else would."

At this moment the door opened and a footman announced Mr. Andros.

"We are having a theological discussion," said Gill, when she had shaken hands. Mr. Andros looked surprised.

"Not a bit of it," said the priest. "The duchessa was giving me specimens of episcopal conversation. I must say I think she's better at home here."

BOOK III

CHAPTER XXXV

Lest the deliberateness of Mr. Andros and the Duchessa di Torre Greca should weary the patient reader, we will pass over a good many months, during which they constantly met, and during which their life moved calmly but securely onward. Nearly a year after her coming to Moat, Gillian quietly told him that she had made up her mind to join his Church.

He turned quickly, and showed unmistakably that he was surprised.

"I see," she said, "that you did not suspect me of thinking much about religion at all."

"I never took the liberty of wondering what your thoughts might be. I am not specially inquisitive, and I take my friends as they seem, or seem to wish to seem."

"Exactly; and I did not seem ecclesiastically minded."

"Not a bit. But religion does not consist in being ecclesiastically minded."

"That is a good thing; for I shall never be what I call ecclesiastically minded. Lady Merle will never believe that I am really a Catholic. It will take me a long time to give up disliking going to church, for instance. I feel devout now and then — if it is devout. But I can't undertake to feel like that every Sunday at eleven o'clock."

"Mass here is at half-past ten," suggested Philip, laughing.

"That's half-an-hour worse. But I don't want you to give me credit for deep thoughts I haven't had. I have arrived at your Church oddly. Life itself was my trouble: not what are called the troubles of life. It seemed to me a stale and uninteresting pursuit, in which, however, I and every one was inevitably engaged. I came here simply to exist, with as little annoyance as possible. Then I met two very different people, one with a purpose in life, the other with an agony of desire for life itself. But the purpose in life of one of them I could see was worship, and the other made me realise what a passion worship must be. His worship was pathetically misplaced—"

Philip at this point got up and moved to stand by the empty fireplace, so that his back was turned to her for a moment, and she could not see the expression of his face.

"Nevertheless," she went on, "the worship was real, in spite of its blind misdirection. And I knew that anything so real must have a real motive and object somewhere. For that I looked in vain here, and for the first time I was compelled to look up. Of God I knew nothing: and finally I confessed my ignorance to Father Pope. He was patient, though he often declared I made him impatient. If he could not always make me see what he saw himself, I could not doubt that he did see. I am not coming into your Church because I have learned, but because I want to learn, and I like a teacher who at any rate does not insist that neither she nor any one else knows anything about it."

Mr. Andros had been surprised, and was surprised still. As soon almost as he had known that Gillian was not a Catholic, she had struck him as one singularly unlikely to become one. He had many friends outside his own Church, but they were mostly people with a

steady, if mainly habitual, belief in the religion of their Protestant forefathers: they were very far from agnosticism, or even indifferentism. Not only were they genuine believers in God, but he knew that they thoroughly believed that Christ was God. The idea of God was as old with them as any other idea they had: it was a new and strange experience to hear any one speak, as Gillian spoke now, of *arriving* at the idea of God, and certainly the process in her case seemed to have been an odd one.

Father Pope had often enough spoken to him about their neighbour, but casually, and without discussion: indeed Philip would have been strongly averse from discussing her with any one. It would have been much the same if he had been more willing to talk her over, for the elderly priest was not a gossip, and had the priestly habit of observing without letting loose the result of his observations in irresponsible conversation. He had never hinted that he thought her likely to become a Catholic, or shown that he knew her to be without the common degree of religious knowledge or faith.

He had, in fact, not given her much to read, or spoken to her much about the Church. Lacordaire's *Conferences on God, God and Man, and Jesus Christ*, and Cardinal Manning's very small book called the *Grounds of Faith* had been for a long time the only books he lent or suggested to her.

She happened then to talk to him of the other great cardinal, and he had advised her to get some of Newman's lectures, and his *Apologia*. These she had found very easy reading, as any real reader must, and particularly the volume called *The Second Spring*.

"These books," she now told Philip, "not only interested me, but they gave me an ever-growing sense of purpose in life. No one can be in the company of those two cardinals and go on thinking life a common

thing and mean: and the meaning of life is the same with each, though they are so entirely different in character and manner. It all comes to this, that life is worship: service is a servile-sounding word, and service must really be servile when the master is not greater than the servant; so one is brought to look above man for his only worthy master."

Philip could see that even to say this much made her shy; she was altogether too shy to speak of God by His name. And he himself felt as shy as she had done with Mark long ago.

Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth, indeed, speaks, but that heart cannot always speak at all.

He was much more glad than he could say, but to express his gladness would have seemed to his English reticence almost gushing. He was full of his religion, nevertheless he was a young man and not exactly a pietist. Lionel Thorne would have been able to launch into congratulations, neatly phrased, and apposite enough; that talented convert could have composed a fifth creed in a quarter of an hour, embodying all the teaching of the existing four in a fusillade of epigrams, and damning the contrary heresies by irresistible parodies. His faith was so light and airy that it rose naturally to the surface, and bubbled out in expression. But if the Catholic Church had been composed of Lionel Thornes, Gill would certainly have tried to climb up to heaven by any available Jacob's ladder rather than by the help of the Mother and Mistress of Churches.

She did not misunderstand Philip's quietness and almost silence; after all, the Catholic religion was not part of the Andros estate, and he was not to welcome her into it, as if somehow he were her host. Lionel Thorne would have done the honours, and insisted on offering his invaluable services as cicerone to the Rome

of the Popes much as the benevolent Mr. Cook makes the bewildered tourist at home in the Rome of the Cæsars and King Victor Emmanuel. Philip Andros had no capacity for personally conducting a fresh arrival through the beauties and points of interest of the old religion. The indigenous Roman mostly leaves the pilgrim to himself, to find out or to miss what is worthy of attention; guide-books are generally provided by foreigners or newcomers, who affix the asterisk of importance impartially to the Colosseum and the Grand Hotel.

Philip believed that he now understood why his neighbour, who had always interested him, had seemed more interesting of late. At the time he had merely supposed that he was getting to know her better, not that she herself had in any way changed or was changing. He had never consented to call her superficial, or to believe that she was so. She could not have interested him had he ever had any such feeling concerning her. But what might be beneath the surface he had failed to conjecture. For a long time she had resolutely refused to show anything but that surface.

For several months past, however, while maintaining almost as obstinately as ever this reserve of herself, she had given more and more the idea of a character either originally deeper than she had chosen to allow any one to surmise, or else actually in process of striking deeper roots in some hidden direction.

To some extent it was a misfortune that neither of these people were naturally talkers. Gill was in reality not only reserved but indolent, and to such a woman silence is far easier than speech, even when there is no positive intention of reserve. Andros was very far from indolent, but he was much behind his generation in fluency of expression, and shrank from unimpressive and purposeless talk, as he also shrank from inquisi-

tiveness. He was not heavy, but he was serious, and, while thoroughly grateful to books or people who amused him, had not much knack of being entertaining himself. Gill, for her part, was a humorous observer rather than an amusing talker; and her contemporaries were apt to amuse her most when they least intended to be funny.

On the present occasion Philip could not say, what was in his heart, that his friend's adoption of his own creed was a personal joy to himself, because it must give them something in common, than which nothing could be more important; to say so would have seemed to him a sort of impertinence — a mere personal satisfaction of the kind, however deep, being so small a matter in comparison of the thing itself.

Gill knew him better than to expect him to say anything of the kind, and was quite able to perceive his gladness at her news without his expressing it in words. Nevertheless she put his satisfaction down rather to the happiness any sincere Catholic must have in hearing of another soul drawing to the light, than to any special concern, beyond that of strong friendship, in herself. She did not think of her change of faith, or more truly her dawn of faith, as of the removal of a barrier. No doubt she had always felt instinctively that Philip Andros would never marry any one but a Catholic, but she had not once suspected that in any circumstances would he wish to marry herself.

As Philip walked home he did think of the removal of this barrier; but it did not make any difference to his hopes. Catholic or no Catholic herself, Gill would have loved him just the same; and he had never in the least suspected that she had, in fact, loved him from the first day they had met.

That she had married once without love he now felt

sure, but he felt equally sure that she would not make the same mistake again; nor did he wish her to be capable of repeating it.

He believed he knew many excellent husbands and wives among his acquaintances who had never been in love with each other — or any one else; probably they were not of the stuff lovers are made of. But Gill was. He divined in her not only the capacity of love, but the ultimate necessity for it. Some day she would be the sufferer from a great passion, or would find her life crowned by one.

He could not think of himself as the object of a great passion; he was not mock-modest, and knew well enough what practical friends would consider his advantages; but what had they to do with it? Women do very readily accept offers of marriage from men with immense estates and an ancient name, and know that they are lucky when the possessor of these good things happens to be young and well-favoured, of fine breeding and manners, of good morals and unblemished character. But not one of these, or all together, inspire what is called a great passion.

Philip did not for a moment suppose that Gill would accept him without being in love with him, but if he had *known* she would, he would not have had her on those conditions.

The unlighted lamp he saw was now enkindled, but it never struck him that he had had any share in lighting it.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Gillian had been a Catholic a whole year before anything happened to open Philip's eyes. Lady Merle had fulfilled Gill's prophecy by finding the new convert but imperfectly satisfactory. Lady Merle was herself incapable of being bored, as all bores are, and she was continually being scandalised by the duchessa's obvious facilities in that direction. Gill was bored by nearly all her excellent neighbour's *banales* enthusiasms. She cared nothing for certain society preachers whom she had never heard, and was inwardly determined never to hear. Poor Gill did not yet care much for any sermons; she liked Father Pope very much, but his discourses, though excellently practical, were not particularly practical for her; his hearers were mostly farm-labourers, and her own shortcomings were not precisely theirs. She read Cardinal Newman's sermons with interest, but availed herself of the pleasant privilege of not reading them when she felt inclined to do something else — which was frequently the case; and she liked them much in the same way as she liked other pieces of literature. Lacordaire's Notre Dame discourses she enjoyed also, when she was in the vein, but they charmed her as delicate psychological essays rather than as sermons.

The delight in being preached at was a gift of the truly pious to which she was not entitled, and which she was far from having attained.

No doubt society had its faults, and Lady Merle might well be aware of them, for Lady Merle was nothing if she was not a bulwark of society; but Gill had

never felt herself to belong to society, and the denunciations of its excrescent extravagances mattered as little to her as if she had been an Icelander or an albatross.

Lady Merle's charities excited her very little more. To Lady Merle the East — of London — was a "calling"; rather oddly, since her own feet were particularly firmly planted in the West. But Father Someone had given the signal "Eastward-ho," and the occidentalists flocked thither with Catholic culture and condescension in their pockets: Limehouse Hole was to be regenerated from Park Lane, in spite of the crying iniquities of that quarter of the town.

Gill, we have confessed, was indolent, and it appalled her to learn that spirituality was to be so busily altruistic.

"But, my dear, those dockers are simply material — sodden in materialism. One should do what one can."

"I thought it was the fine people who were materialists."

"Oh, he means the Protestants."

"I doubt it. He is too sensible to think his congregation chiefly composed of Protestants."

"Ah, but he gets at them. His sermons are all printed in the papers. Jimmy St. Clare says they are the finest 'scoop' his paper has had for years."

"Anyway, I don't live in London half the year as you do," Gill persisted, "and I really can't go and live there on purpose to drive down and tell the dockers that they are materialists. They would probably tell me they liked being materialists, and beg me to drive back and be immaterial in my flat, and leave them alone."

"Of course we tell them nothing of the kind. We *show* them the higher life."

"I daresay," suggested Gill exasperatingly, "they would not mind living the higher life if they had appropriate incomes."

"My dear duchessa! You must be aware that that is nonsense. It is not the higher life as the æsthetic cant of the day understands it that we would win them to. That's the business of the non-Catholic East-end missions — and pestilent rubbish it all is. Sandro Botticelli will do no more to regenerate Bethnal Green than Barclay and Perkins. Catholic faith and Catholic practice are our weapons, and it costs nothing to be good. The real 'higher life' can be lived in one room as well as in a castle. It is no question of income."

"But, my dear Lady Merle, I am not living the higher life myself. How can I 'show' it to any one else? Neither am I a qualified teacher of Catholic faith and practice. I have only been a Catholic a few months, and there's a good deal to understand."

"Of course. But my idea is that one learns by teaching. I know I had not been a Catholic a year before I had written a little series of novelettes illustrative of the seven sacraments — there were nine of the booklets, for I felt inspired to add one on the sign of the cross — called *Billy's Habit* (they were for the people, you understand), and one called *The White Wave*, on holy water. I know they taught me —"

"Yes, but I can't write — and if I tried I'm afraid even my own ignorance would be unenlightened by it."

"There's no need for you to write. There are diversities of gifts, you know. But you can act."

"No, I can't," persisted Gill perversely. "You remember I tried for your Penny Reading, and even Angela confessed I was a hopeless stick."

"I hope Angela was not so impertinent: but I did not mean that sort of acting — though we find it useful

in the East too — my little play called *Satan's Breaches* went down spendidly at Limehouse."

"*Satan's Breeches!*"

Lady Merle reddened; she was not short-tempered, but she was never vulgar, and Gill seemed both vulgar and impertinent.

"My dear duchessa, if we can't be serious —"

And her dignity was proportionate to the provocation. But she changed the subject, which was all poor Gill wanted.

"Lady Merle knows a lot," she told Father Pope. "I am always learning from her. Did you know the devil wore small-clothes?"

Then she confessed her iniquities, and his reverence reproved her — not too rigorously.

"The duchessa is flippant," Lady Merle informed her daughters, "and has no missionary spirit. Father Faber tells us that every Catholic who is in earnest must desire to make converts."

"Father Pope is in earnest, mamma, and he says the first approach of a convert gives him cold water down his back."

This was Angela, who was wont to stick up for her friends.

"Father Pope never makes that sort of remark to me," said her mother.

"Nor to me," declared Winifride. "The duchessa seems to me only half-converted. She spoke of hearing Mass as 'going to service' the other day. I longed to tell her that only housemaids 'go to service.'"

"I wish you had," observed her sister with a cheerful grimness. "She's just the kind of person one *can* make that sort of remark to."

"No, no," said Lady Merle with judicial impartiality, "Catholic phraseology one picks up with time. I know it took me months to give up speaking of a

priest's 'receiving' confession. But she is, as I said, flippant. I told her about the Chinese babies, and I must say she gave me five pounds for the Holy Childhood. But she said I had destroyed her peace of mind — if a Chinese baby only costs sixpence, how could she ever again eat an eighteenpenny ice at Junker's without feeling she had swallowed three of them?"

"Not only flippant but vulgar," ejaculated Winifride.

"And not only vulgar but witty," said Angela, "which is unpardonable. We could all be vulgar if we had the pluck, but no abandonment of principle would make you, dear Winifride, amusing."

"Angela!" said her mother, "you are not to speak like that to your elder sister."

"She's only five years older," murmured Angela sweetly.

Winifride was, like her mother, too dignified to bandy repartee, and scorned to try and snub her incorrigible sister. It is always undignified to snub people till you know how.

"If the Catholic Church bores her," she said, "I wonder why the duchessa became a Catholic at all."

"To save her soul, perhaps," suggested Angela. "I know slumming bores me, but without it, I understand, there is no remission."

"My dear," observed Lady Merle, "you had better not model your conversational style on the duchessa's. You, at all events, are English and unmarried. Flippancy is quite odious in a girl."

CHAPTER XXXVII

That autumn brought Gill a new pleasure, for she began to hunt.

Till she came to England she had never ridden, and during her first winter at home she had doubted whether she rode well enough, but Philip at last succeeded in persuading her to try, and she found hunting a great deal easier than she had imagined. At the end of her first day out she wondered how she had lived without it. The pleasures of life had never greatly fascinated her, but here at last was one which was a pure delight.

"Well," said Philip, "you see how well you got on. Any one would say you had been hunting ever since you were ten years old."

"Fifteen years! I wish I had. It would be something to have fifteen English winters to look back on."

She never spoke as if retrospect were one of the pleasures of life.

"I like you for speaking friendly of English winters. I remember last year being afraid that when winter came you would escape to Italy."

"I never had the least temptation. It would not have been escape; it would have been going back into exile. England is more England than ever in autumn and winter. There's nothing like it in the south."

Philip laughed.

"I suppose that is why so many people run south at those seasons."

"Well, they *have* homes in England, and know it. They can come back as soon as they like. If they had

ever been homeless in the south they would not be so keen about it."

"Did not you ever feel that your home was there?"

"I don't remember that I did. You see, my married life with the Duca di Torre Greca only lasted two years, and we were not always even in Italy. Both winters we spent abroad — I mean on the French Riviera. And in Italy we stayed weeks and months together away from my husband's home; besides, I should not know which to call his home — Naples, or the villa at Massa Lubrense, or the castle near Telese. People with three or four houses must always be homeless. Moat is my first home."

"It has been a great success; praise me for advising it."

"By all means. Lady Avonsbury has never quite forgiven me for taking your advice. She insists on my being dull here."

"I do not, however, deserve much praise; for it was selfish forethought. I wanted a neighbour."

"And you knew I could not shoot. Even Sir John Middleton in *Sense and Sensibility* would not have been so eager to settle his cousins at the cottage if they could have been sportsmen."

It was quite possible, and Philip knew it, that he would not have cared so much about settling his friend at Moat if the friend had been a man. But this truth he did not avow.

"I wish to-morrow were another hunting day!" declared Gill. "Do you think Lady Merle would allow Angela to hunt? I know she wants to."

But Mr. Andros was quite sure that Lady Merle would allow no such thing. Two's company; and it certainly struck him as more interesting to ride home at the end of a day's hunting with Gill alone than it could have been to escort her and his cousin.

"Angela doesn't ride particularly well," he said, "and she is careless without having much nerve. For a lady who has good nerve and takes reasonable care there is no danger whatever in hunting. But if Angela came out with us her mother would never be easy. I couldn't advise it."

"It isn't winter yet," Gill remarked presently, "but one feels it coming on. There's a grip in the air at nights, and in the morning. I like that; it gives one an *alive* feeling that is like being young. I shall go in for being young in future; I had no chance at the proper time."

"At five-and-twenty the effort need not be hopeless."

"Far from it. I still feel that, with luck, I have a pleasant year or so before me. Good evening, Mark!"

She pulled up, and Philip somehow felt that he was expected to ride on, which he did slowly for a hundred yards, and then stopped to wait for her. It was mid-October, and rather late, for they had had a longish ride home, and the dusk, with a faint nip of frost in it, was gathering.

"How are you?" Gill asked her peasant-friend. "I can almost see, even in this light, that I needn't ask."

"I am grand. And it's been a grand day. I didn't know which to like best, the smell of it or the look. Mr. Andros is waiting for your Grace; I'll bid you good-night, my lady."

"Good-night, Mark — if you're in a hurry." And Gill made her horse understand that he might go on.

Mark reddened, and said quietly:

"*I'm* in no hurry; but now I'm well I know better than to think your Grace can be wasting your time with me. It's fine to see you; that's enough. And you've never passed me once without stopping to say a word — all these months."

It irritated her to be called "your Grace," and it did not please her that he should think it worthy of remark that she should not pass him by without speaking.

"Well, good-night again. I shall come and see your mother to-morrow."

And then she did ride on.

"You ought to be proud of your power," said Philip, as they went on together. "Young Herrick does not look now as if he had ever dreamt of dying."

"One sees now how strong he is. The doctors forgot it when they took it for granted he had to die."

She did not seem particularly inclined to say more on the subject, and the squire was not specially anxious to talk about the peasant. She was thinking that Mark to-night had been more like himself in the days when she knew him first; his manner had been almost remotely respectful, and his words had been simply reasonable; but there was a rough tone beneath that reminded her of the afternoon when he tried to make her bid him live. To be at once hard and gentle is uncommon, but Mark had seemed both gentle and hard to-night.

It occurred to Gill as one of Philip's good points that he did not have moods.

"Are you ever cross?" she inquired.

"Oh yes," he replied cheerfully.

"I've never seen you so; we can't be really intimate."

"I am generally cross before breakfast, and it would hardly be worth while to walk down to Moat at that unusual hour merely to let you see it."

"You admit your defects of temper too readily; I don't believe in them. Now nothing on earth would make me confess I was ever disagreeable."

"I didn't go so far as that either."

"I should think," observed Gill, after a brief survey of consideration, "that if you *were* in a bad humour you would be disagreeable indeed."

"Then I shall not treat you to one of my tempers, even for the sake of being intimate. I told you I was not ambitious."

"'By that sin fell the angels'; in them it was, of course, ridiculous. When there is nothing attainable above one, ambition must be wanton."

"Yes. That is my principle. I see what is above me, but am sober enough to see it unattainable. You quote Shakespeare and Jane Austen — I thought you made profession of being illiterate."

"That was two years ago, and in that time even an illiterate person may read *Henry VIII.* and *Sense and Sensibility.* As a matter of fact I have read *all* Miss Austen's works twice, but the apt quotation from Shakespeare comes out of Angela's Birthday Book, in which I wrote my name yesterday."

"Do you read all evening? You have almost all your evenings alone."

"Yes, I do. And so I suppose you do, though you have more people to stay with you — and go away more too."

"Even when I am by myself I do not always read. I am out nearly all day, and there are hosts of letters to write, and dozens of other dull things to do connected with the management of a great estate: only I don't find them dull."

They were each of them interested in imagining how the other passed the time of absence; if not intimate, they ought to have been. No wonder Lady Avonsbury longed to shake them both.

"I should like," he went on, "to know about the

books you read, especially the novels. Jane Austen — since you read her all through every year — tells me something. Cardinal Newman would utterly deny that you could be illiterate."

"I have read *Evelina* much more than twice, and *Castle Rackrent*, and *The Absentee* as often. Most of George Meredith about once, and all of Thomas Hardy once and a half."

Philip laughed.

"Your three women get read more easily than your two men."

"Yes; because you can read them whether you are in the humour or not. You always *are* in the humour before you have finished the first paragraph. You must have your wits about you when it is *Evan Harrington* or *Richard Feveril*, or you don't know what they are all at. And the most splendid of Hardy's books can only be read when you could also be reading *King Lear*. Not that any book of his is in the least like *King Lear* — *Père Goriot* is; though Balzac is nothing like so great as Hardy."

"Let me flatter you by quoting Lady Catherine de Burgh: 'Upon my word you give your opinion very decidedly for so young a person.'"

"Elizabeth Bennet was only twenty; I am five years older — and a widow. Lady Catherine would have thought that made a great difference."

"And that your being a duchess made a great deal more."

"Ah, but only an Italian duchess. Her ladyship would never have compared duchesses and duchessas. You are not really interested in my reading, or you would want to know whether I prefer Dickens or Thackeray, whether I can read Sir Walter Scott, and if my women novelists include George Eliot, Mrs. Gaskell, and the Brontës."

"I am trembling to hear that you do prefer Dickens to Thackeray."

"Get it over. I do. Society, even when snobbish, has not the true English reader's charm for me. Thackeray's poor creatures are much poorer creatures to me than they were to him. And though he loves the back-stairs it is to get up to the drawing-room. If I used them at all I should think it more fun to go down to the kitchen. His footmen, however, are just as mean as his fine gentry."

"The best man I know says that *Vanity Fair* is the best spiritual reading he ever read."

"Perhaps he is a duke; I am only a duchessa. And though not celebrated for goodness, I happen not to be worldly. Thomas Hardy makes better spiritual reading for me; for there is spirit in him. He cares so little for externals that he is not to waste his time pulling them off. Thackeray thinks so deeply about coronets that he must wonder how Lord X looks in heaven without one. Dickens is more human: eating really matters more to people than carriages or clothes, so he never leaves the British public long in suspense as to what Mr. Pickwick got for supper."

Philip laughed, and begged for enlightenment as to Gill's preferences in the case of George Eliot and the Brontës.

"*Silas Marner* was enough to make such a repute as no *Daniel Deronda* could permanently obscure. And if *The Mill on the Floss* had stopped before Maggie became genteel, it would have been quite unnecessary to drown her and her brother to remind us of what they had been as children. Here is Moat, and unless you will come back to dinner you have no chance of hearing to-night about the Brontës and Mrs. Gaskell."

"May I really come back to dinner?"

"Certainly: you had better get something to eat at

home first. My cook thinks ladies living alone should not be hungry twice a day."

If Lady Avonsbury had heard Gill calmly inviting Mr. Andros to a *tête-à-tête* dinner she might have given up wanting to shake her.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

Mr. Andros, without adopting Gill's suggested precaution, had no occasion to be hungry when the dinner she gave him was finished. It was certainly not long, but neither greediness or hunger made him wish it to be longer. A meal with a butler and a footman in attendance is only *tête-à-tête* from the point of view of society. But when coffee had been brought into the oak parlour they were really alone.

"And now for Mrs. Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë," he observed, "or I shall have come on false pretences."

Whether Mr. Andros really cared so much as he pretended about those eminent writers, the reader must decide for himself. Lady Avonsbury, if she had been eavesdropping, would have said, "God bless the man! What does he want to talk about other women for with that woman opposite him?" But Lady Oscathorpe would have said, "Let them alone; some people flirt better about books than about anything else."

And the truth was Philip wanted Gill to talk, and he had seldom found her more ready to talk than during their ride home, earlier in the evening, when the conversation had happened to turn on her reading.

"You are not to assume," said Gill, "that the Brontës means Charlotte. Her three books and a half are as much over-reputed as Emily's one is under-reputed. *The Professor* and *Villette* can only count as a book and a half, for they are the same book declined masculine and feminine. Both of them, and *Jane Eyre*, only required a governess with genius and a bad digestion to write. But *Wuthering Heights* is so astound-

ing that it is impossible to think of its being merely written at all. It antedates all literary epochs, like Homer; and it was not *made*, as all her sister's books were, out of the thin experience to hand, which was already over-used before Charlotte stopped writing, but was created out of nothing. It can no more be measured than a whirlwind, no more analysed than lightning; its cold is blistering like Arctic frost and its fire is like an iceberg on fire in a sunset. It would be bathos to call it a masterpiece."

Perhaps it was not odd, after all, that Philip should be content to hear her discuss books; her indolence in speech gave way to an energy that seemed almost agitated.

"It is a long time since I read *Wuthering Heights*," he said. "You make me impatient to read it again. Perhaps I read it too young; it seems to me that it struck me as inhuman."

"It is human altogether — superhuman. It is almost nothing but men — male men and female; not *people* — baronets and barmaids. Not Mayfair in town or out of town, or Clapham, or Middlemarch. If you are vulgar or genteel it is not for you: it has nothing to do with botany, or clothes, or incomes, poor-rates, or members of Parliament, or party doings. There is nothing in it mean or funny, or sentimental. The *dramatis personæ* are not to be known by their titles or their tricks; they are passions with mouths to say, and hands to do; furies if you like, but not vague furies; love, and 'Love's black sister Hate,' and anger and a spite that is terrible but never trifling or trivial. . . . Heathcliff is the one real lover of literature — if one can think of him and mere literature together. Catherine was not his ideal, his object, his desire, but more himself than he was himself — as no one but himself has ever said in any book."

Gill stopped speaking to carry on her thought in silence; and, after respecting her silence for a while, Philip asked her, with a plain diffidence, if she would mind saying what she was thinking, since he was sure it must be the sequence of what she had said already.

"Very well. No one could believe in Heathcliff and not believe in something greater. He is a passion of worship, not a profession of it. And the object of his adoration was a fetish: only adorable because she was adored. Any decent person would go mad rather than believe that such adoration *had* no object; that it was a mere folly and waste. It *could* not be for nothing, it must have been deserved *somewhere;* nowhere here, but none the less somewhere out of poor Heathcliff's sight, perhaps out of Emily Brontë's, though perhaps not. Your prophet is not always to know what he is prophesying about, or to say only the little he means. He has to go beyond himself like Balaam."

"You," said Philip, with a quiet smile that was not sarcastic, "are probably the first of the critics to discover in *Wuthering Heights* a proof of the existence of God."

"A result of it; and every appreciated result is a proof of its cause. Don't be scandalised," she suddenly entreated, "if I get at Him my own way, by obscure paths. He is in the wilderness, barren and empty, thorny and thirsty, as well as in the ordered garden where flowers and fountains are. I am of the desert, and its wildness clings to me; I cannot go to heaven Lady Merle's way."

Alas! he laughed. A man may best cloak emotion by laughter, and this last word of hers had moved him.

Assuredly he had no wish that she should resemble Lady Merle in any particular; he had risen from his seat and was standing close to her, almost leaning over

her, with his slim back against the chimney-piece. But he laughed; and also the door opened and a footman brought his mistress a telegram.

"My dressmaker telegraphs to say she will be here by the 12:45 to-morrow," said Gill. "It is a good thing, after all, that it is not a hunting day."

Though the footman was soon gone, Philip was savage with him, which was unreasonable, for his own laugh would have done the business without the telegram.

"And now," said Gill serenely, "for Mrs. Gaskell, who ought to have been strangled after *Cranford*, and let some one else write *Sylvia's Lovers* and *Wives and Daughters*, which we would be sorry to go without. I almost think Mrs. Oliphant might have done it, if she hadn't lived at Windsor, and had been left residuary legatee of Mrs. Gaskell's unappropriated genius. The case is too hypothetic for me to decide, though so young a woman. Mr. Birrell may settle it."

Philip was not now anxious for Mrs. Gaskell, or even for Mr. Birrell; but he had laughed and had to pay for it.

"So you read essays as well as novels," he said, making the best of it — which was to make her talk.

"The same person reads both — real essays, and real novels. Macaulay's are no more essays than Miss Corelli's are real novels. She is the Giant Despair of fiction, and he is the Mr. Worldly Wiseman of criticism."

"*Pilgrim's Progress* too! A baby could see you were illiterate."

"Yes, if he were old enough to examine me in the *Songs of Innocence*. 'Tiger, Tiger, beaming bright,' and 'Little lamb, who made you?' are all the Blake I can read . . . but you will kindly remember," she added meekly, "that I live alone; and I will admit, not to pain you, that I only got through *Pilgrim's Progress*

in *sorties* — I did not read him 'right on,' like Mark Antony."

Philip laughed again (but it didn't matter this time).

"I never knew before that Mark Antony had read John Bunyan at all. But a great man is often before his age; St. Paul is known to have been on the Northern side in the American War and against the Secession States; and one gathers that Moses and the prophets admired Cromwell as much as Carlyle did."

"Carlyle makes my back ache, but I don't mind; climbing mountains does too, but the view and the air at the top are sometimes worth it. I like him better than Macaulay — an ill-tempered anti-pope is finer company than a prig on an elephant. The four gospels *may* have been written at Ecclefechan; but I cannot believe the Almighty is a Whig."

"Each of your remarks is like a very short essay," Philip declared, laughing.

"An essay to say quickly what I mean; there's no harm in that. A real essay is the most diffident excursion of private judgment, and Macaulay chose to call his infallible definitions essays; and so people have got to think an essayist means some one who was born omniscient, and had not shaken it off as a schoolboy. The delusion has been fostered by Hazlitt and Emerson, who are more ponderous than Macaulay, but less conceited. Some of Emerson's essays — take, for instance, the one on character — gives one so much to think of that one can never get quite to the end of it. It is the same thing with Meredith's first books; I can never read a chapter through at a time because he sends me scurrying off after ideas. Nothing will persuade me that the English really like him, or that they read him as much as they brag of him; he has too much to say, like Browning. Liebig's Extract

eaten dry isn't soup — a *tisane* is easier to swallow. Tennyson understood that better, and his popular poems have only one idea apiece, so that folks, by the last verse, have had time to find out what it is. An easy novelist knows it too, and never wastes two ideas on one book. Lady Merle advised me to read *Adam Ulswater.* 'It's all against deceased wife's sisters,' she assured me."

"If you are going to abuse Tennyson," protested Mr. Andros, who didn't care sixpence, but wanted her to go on, "I shall burst into tears. My mother brought me up on him. We have a round table now in the dining-room which was bought to remind me of the *Idylls of the King.*"

"I would not abuse him for worlds, even to see you cry. I admire him too much to dare to praise him — only I think it served him right that he wrote the *May Queen* and *Lady Clara Vere de Vere,* as well as *Ulysses, Tithonus,* the *Dream of Fair Women,* and the *Lotus Eaters.* Browning never wrote middle-clash bosh; if Tennyson had ever written anything which somebody could not understand no one would have taken the trouble to find out what it meant. . . . All this while you are not smoking. Here are some cigarettes; I forgot all about them, because I do not smoke myself. My father gave me leave to, when I tried once, and I never tried again."

Philip stayed long enough to smoke several cigarettes; and Gill no longer, as she called it to herself, harangued him on Shakespeare and the musical glasses; but though he now bore his fair share in the conversation, he said nothing which Lady Avonsbury or Lady Oscathorpe would have thought to the point. The *tête-à-tête* evening, they would have agreed, had been singularly wasted.

Nevertheless, as Philip walked home, he thought more of Gill than ever. He was determined to read *Wuthering Heights* again without loss of time; and, when he did so, behind Heathcliff's fierce personality he saw Gillian always.

CHAPTER XXXIX

Two days after this Gill and Philip hunted again, and that day remained ever memorable in their lives.

Meanwhile she had remembered her promise of going to see Mark's mother, and had kept it. But Mark himself she did not see. Whether he understood her to bid him be also at home or no, he did not obey her. For one thing he preferred meeting her alone, as he often did by chance, during her walks: and there was another reason.

Gill did not try to account to herself for his absence from the cottage at a time when she had said she would be there. She knew him to be wayward and full of moods: in some of his moods she would much rather not have to talk to him.

The meet on the day following her visit to Mrs. Herrick's cottage was at no great distance from Moat, at a place called Dishley Church, though no church was there now, or had been within living memory. There was still a churchyard, long disused, surrounded by a very ancient wall: and close to where the church had once stood were three enormously old yew-trees, known as the "Queen's trees," and said to have been planted by Henry VIII.'s first wife. Many people, however, learned in such matters declared that yews could not have grown to such a size in three centuries and a half, and maintained that the queen who planted them must have been the wife of some earlier Henry.

Philip and Gill were among the first arrivals, and he told her about all this.

"It is my business to keep the wall from falling into

ruin," he informed her; "and, as long as people were buried here, the burials used to be registered at Andros. We have the book still, and the last burials were registered by my grandfather. You will understand that none of the folk so buried were Catholics. But this church was a 'donative,' and belonged to St. Cross Abbey, which originally stood where Andros is now. All the rights of the Abbot of St. Cross belong to me still — so that, though I am a Catholic, the chancels of four of the churches round here are my freehold — which gives me the privilege of keeping their roofs in repair. Some lawyers say that I could run a wall, if I liked, between them and the naves of the churches, as the Duke of Norfolk has done at Arundel, and use them as mortuary chapels, and have Mass in them."

"Was it not odd that Queen Mary should have given your ancestor an abbey? One would think she would have wanted to put back the abbot and his monks."

"She did not give it to us. My ancestor bought it from the Wriothesleys, to whom Henry VIII. had granted it: and he compounded matters at Rome by undertaking to found another abbey in Spain, which he did; Santo Cruz still exists in Galicia, and I still pay an annuity to its abbot. Isn't it all queer? I am lay-rector of Coldhampton and of White Newton, of Fenny Whitchurch and of Meadow Washbourne; the clergymen are only my vicars. Poor men! their great tithes all come to me. The same thing, of course, happens all over the country, though the lay-rector is generally of the Established Church, so he pockets the whole tithe with a clean conscience. In my case there are deductions: for in Catholic times, I have discovered, certain benefactions were annexed to the churches, with obligation of perpetual Masses for the souls of the benefactors, and those I feel bound to keep up. I therefore pay the money to the nearest Catholic

churches, so that the conditions of the original bequests may be fulfilled. Dishley always interests me: it is an odd, almost weird spot."

Gill looked around and agreed with him. The lonely churchyard stood far from any hamlet, on the edge of a bleak moorland; beside the three yews there were no trees within a mile of the place, except a sombre belt of windy firs, called Cloudy Scrub, running along a low ridge. The country just here had none of the smug affluent look of that quite close to Andros and Moat.

"It seems strange there should ever have been a church here," said Gill; "was there once a village?"

"No, never. The church, always very small, was a votive chapel, built by a certain Abbot Hilton of St. Cross in memory of some of his kindred who fell in Henry V.'s French Wars. So much for the past: now for the present. Here comes the Master."

The Master of the North Rentshire Hounds was already an acquaintance of Gill's, and he rode up to her to say he was glad to see her out again. Perhaps he was not quite the traditional M. F. H. He was a good deal under middle age, and his face was not red; nor was he much in the habit of swearing at "thrusters," whom he slew instead by the Arctic chill of his politeness. But some people said he permitted his whip to swear for him when the interests of sport seemed to demand it. At all events Sam Boligs availed himself of the hypothetic leave, as the gypsies avail themselves of their Divine dispensation in the matter of stealing. It may seem odd that Sir Humphrey's huntsman did not do the swearing, but Mr. Chass modelled himself on his master, and never used strong language: he had, however, an uncommonly disagreeable laugh, of which he made effective use when he considered it called for.

On first principles, perhaps, neither Sam Boligs or Mr. Chass would have cared much for hunting ladies;

but, as both Sir Humphrey's sisters hunted, and as the Master was supposed to be on the point of proposing to one of Lord Chiltern's daughters (though no one knew to which), and all the Ladies Mendip hunted, first principles had nothing to do with it. The duchessa could evidently ride, without seeming to want to show off her riding, so neither huntsman nor whip felt bound to regard her with malevolence.

The Master of the North Rentshire did not care much for subscriptions, nevertheless it was held to be a pleasing feature in the "Italian" lady's character that she had sent in a very handsome cheque, on the ground of keeping up the tradition of Moat, whence a subscription had always been forthcoming. A good many of her neighbours now rode up and expressed their satisfaction at seeing her out again. A quiet woman, living entirely alone, who very seldom has visitors staying in her house, has so few opportunities of being seen that she is liable to be thought unwilling to be seen, and even unsociable. North Rentshire, moreover, is not inclined to push intimacies with newcomers, and North Rentshire in this instance had been inclined to wait: it was supposed to be clear that the lady at Moat would presently make a short move to Andros, and her reception into the Catholic Church was held to be a mere preliminary: so people thought there was time enough: when firmly settled at Andros she would more plainly belong to the neighbourhood. Her coming out hunting, however, did more for her in two days than her being at Moat for two years had done before. All who had met her now availed themselves of their slight degree of acquaintance, and those who had not seemed anxious to be introduced.

Mr. Andros did a good deal of introducing, though not all, and he certainly felt more intimate himself this morning, after the *tête-à-tête* dinner last night. He had

not the slightest wish to keep her to himself, and was thoroughly pleased to see her settling down into a regular North Rentshire woman.

"I suppose we shall try Cloudy Scrub first," remarked a certain Mr. Rudge in a voice that was intended to show he knew all about it.

Now Mr. Chass did not admire Mr. Rudge, whom he considered "an imitation toff." He did not think it a case important enough to laugh, but his smile was almost audible. He knew that the Rentshire attorney was looking at him, and several other people too, so the smile was not likely to be lost. As he moved off every one who knew the country was aware that they were not going to Cloudy Scrub — but towards "Maddock's Fuzz," quite in the opposite direction.

"Our concert don't start with an obligato; we ain't got no printed programme in our pockets," Mr. Chass observed to the nearest cavalier — also from Rentchester, and therefore able to appreciate the allusion.

Mr. Rudge had a pretty taste for the violin, and was rather in request at local entertainments for charities. Mr. Wellum was a solicitor, with no musical proclivities, which he held to be effeminate.

"Old Chass," he told his wife that evening, "is a witty chap. You should have heard him sitting on Rudge."

Maddock's Furze lies in a shallow vale not far under a mile from Dishley Church, with big meadows stretching away from it. Foxes have often been found there, and when found have generally provided pretty sport. But the foxes seem to know this, and do not invariably oblige.

"Last two times we drew blank," observed Mr. Wellum — not, however, to Mr. Chass.

"But the time before what a run we had!" his interlocutor reminded him. "You were out, I remember,

for you took a toss at Folly Bottom: and I wondered if Mrs. Wellum was a widow."

"You didn't stop to see. Not so far as my memory serves me."

"Not likely. I'd have gone to the funeral, though. I always do. In general, I don't care for sherry, but funeral sherry always strikes me as very decent drinking, with a ham sandwich. In a decent house they should always lay down a dozen or two of good stuff against a funeral. I've got some; and we had a bottle up last Sunday, just to see how it was getting on. My missus and I both liked it. 'Well, Liza,' I said to her, 'it'll do you credit whenever the time comes.' 'Do *you* credit, you mean,' she said. 'Not as I shall touch a drop; I shall have too much to think of.' 'You'll be past thinking, please God,' says I. 'And I shall knock off thinking till after the folks are gone. It'll seem lonesome enough then — with me left to do just as I like, and no one about the place with the right to jaw me for going on the new carpet in boots all muck from the farm.' She did take on. The notion of me a widower, in dirty boots, bothered her a sight more than the idea of her a widow. 'The Lord would sustain her,' she said, 'if it was that way of the stuff. And the children would never get on without a mother,' she said, 'for they can twist their daddy just as they like, the vagrants.' Married women are all like that; they call you 'father,' and only consider you as the children's daddy. As if you and she had been thinking of the children when you kept company."

"He's a dull chap, Worsell," Mr. Wellum informed his wife that night. "Stuck to me all the way to Maddock's Fuzz, and made me think we were never getting there. Talks of his missus, and that, as if a fellow went out hunting to hear about other folk's families."

"A farmer, isn't he?" said Mrs. Wellum with condescension.

"He farms six hundred acres of his own land — so far as that goes; and brings all his business to Wellum and Quid. Sheepwash has been in his family time out of mind; but he's dull though, through living in the country."

"That's the worst of hunting. It mixes you up with all sorts. Didn't you get any talk with any one but Worsell?"

"Old Sir Henry asked if my mother was well," answered Mr. Wellum serenely.

"Your mother! Why, she's been dead these five years."

"Of course. But I didn't remind him. I said: 'As well as can be expected, Sir Harry.' He didn't seem to remember I had married Miss Curly, as was Reverend Curly's oldest daughter."

"Jemima and I were twins, and there was not a quarter of an hour between us."

"I don't forget it, and your father didn't either. He left you both alike."

But these remarks were not made till Mr. and Mrs. Wellum were at supper, which the lady liked to call dinner, though her husband would not, albeit she gave him soup almost every night, and made some show of dressing, to make him do so.

CHAPTER XL

On that particular day they found not only one fox at Cloudy Scrub but two, which was just twice as many as Sir Humphrey or Mr. Chass wanted. Exactly as the old vixen broke out of the scrub and began a bold rush for the open a cub blundered out not two hundred yards away, and sneaked along the ditch as if he could not make up his mind whether to get back into cover or to run off in the opposite direction from his mother. Three very young and inexperienced hounds started off after him, and Mr. Rudge, who was short-sighted also, made off after them.

"Look at those three puppies!" exclaimed Mr. Wellum over his shoulder.

"Four, you mean!" snorted Mr. Chass, slipping quickly past him.

The rest of the pack and the rest of the field were already off.

"Do give 'em time, gentlemen. Do give 'em time," urged Mr. Chass.

And Sam Boligs brought up the four recalcitrants, only three of which he wanted.

Away went the field, and away went the hounds, with just enough start to save Mr. Chass's temper.

The riding was a bit too easy for everybody to please him at first, but he knew that if only the fox could once get well away there would be a chance of the field thinning presently. Soon the pace told a little, though not much, and then there was a brook to cross, wide and not too shallow, with slaggy banks, and rather an uncomfortably deep drop on the far side of it. It

gave much easier footing for fox and hounds than for horses, and hounds and fox got on a bit. Then the vale turned almost a sharp corner, and hounds were no longer full in view; whereupon some, who were less knowing than they thought, remembered short cuts or invented them — and found them deceptive, as short cuts generally are. The old vixen did not head as they felt sure she ought to head, but acted on personal prejudices, and followed out her own ideas irrespective of known principles. She had been, in fact, a widow previous to her present coverture, and her late husband had met his death by going exactly as those short-cutters decided she would go now. It was no part of her notion of wifely duty to rejoin him in another world pretty much where he had left the present. As she had married again, she may have anticipated reproaches.

Sir Humphrey and Mr. Chass had better understood her feelings, and, with those who followed them, kept her closer company, though, when they saw her again, neither they nor the hounds were quite as close on her heels as they had been. For the present they were close enough. A thin field and a good one pleased both Master and huntsman, and they knew that it had been already weeded, and would weed itself more yet.

At the end of the vale the country changed and fences reappeared; there was no road very near, and the meadows were pretty big, but a succession of well-fenced fields is altogether a different matter from a stretch of down. That abomination of desolation, barbed wire, fenced some of the enclosures altogether, and was run through the thinner hedges in other places, and the experienced vixen knew where it was; but Sir Humphrey and Mr. Chass, and the elect, knew where it wasn't, which was just what some eager and ambitious but inexperienced riders did not. Some quite innocent-looking banks tempted them to their ruin or their delay,

which was all the same as ruin to their impatient ardour.

Mr. Chass, who was a pious man on Sundays, was inclined to think that good may possibly come out of evil, here and there, even in the case of barbed wire — not that that excused the villainy of those who had put it there.

I should like to be able to pretend that Gill was still in the very forefront, but the truth is best, and she was not. It was only her second day out, and she was a woman, not a lady-centaur. She knew how to ride, and was learning how to hunt; but in real life ladies who have not ridden at all till they are four- or five-and-twenty, and have never hunted till the day before yesterday, are seldom in the first rank on their second day with hounds. Philip Andros might have been. And it may be taken as a serious proof of how much he was in love that he was able to feel responsible for Gill, and to remember that it was he who had persuaded her to hunt. Unsportsmanlike as it may seem, he preferred to put up with the second flight rather than perhaps lead Gill into mischief.

Her horse did its duty well, and she got over some very pretty fences neatly, still it must be confessed she had done nothing which would make North Rentshire talk for ever of the prowess of the Italian duchessa who had ridden straighter and done more wonderful things than half the hard-bitten North Rentshire squires or their sons who were out. Probably they were just as well content, and her popularity lost nothing. One's fellow-creatures are not morbidly anxious to be dazzled, and to surpass is quite as satisfactory to them as to be surpassed. To be left behind by a woman on a side-saddle, in a country you know and she doesn't, may be surprising, but it is not flattering to your *amour-propre.*

Gill wounded no one's *amour-propre;* not even Lady Marjory Mendip's, who was also on a side-saddle, though she wouldn't have been if her will had been as strong as Lady Chiltern's.

It was Lady Marjory who got the brush, for she was just in at the death, and Gill just wasn't; which was quite as well, for it was to Lady Marjory that Sir Humphrey was going to propose and not to the Duchessa di Torre Greca.

But that old vixen was not the only fox they found that day; if it had been, Philip Andros might not have proposed to the duchessa either.

It was early yet, and Sir Humphrey and Mr. Chass had now got the field they wanted. Those they could do without had gone home to tell lies about the run they had only partly seen, correcting their statements no doubt in time by the information subsequently gleaned from those who had actually seen it all.

"Pounder's Withy Bed," said Sir Humphrey briefly; and Mr. Chass (he was always called Mr. Chass as if it were a nickname) touched his cap, and moved off with his hounds, the Master following close, with Lady Marjory Mendip still chatting to him.

The way lay along a bare valley of very much poorer land than that over which they had lately come. There were few enclosures, and except a few sheep, no live stock was to be seen. The sheep were high up on the down, and took no notice of the hunters and hounds. They were elderly, quiet creatures, who had often seen hounds before without taking any harm of it.

Gill and Philip rode together and discussed the run they had just finished. She had a happy air, and seemed altogether younger and more girlish than when he had first known her.

"It is more like November than October," he observed presently, looking round on the grey, deadly still

landscape. "Do you dislike it? It's the sort of sunless, blackish day that most people who know countries further south find detestable."

"I don't. I like it. Perhaps I don't know why; anyway, I can't say properly. Perhaps just because it is so English. I know these days now, and there's never any harm in them; they do not end in rain or biting winds, and, though there is no sun they are never cold. And they make getting home so cheerful. I like a climate that makes going home nice."

It always pleased him when she praised England, or anything English that is commonly decried. Like all Englishmen, he felt blamed and responsible when people found fault with his country or its climate.

Their talk as they moved along was very trivial; and for that reason, perhaps, seemed more intimate and friendly. They knew every one near them, but neither of them now knew any of the others so well as they knew each other.

Neither of them guessed that they were put down as an engaged, or predestined to be engaged, couple; but nevertheless they both felt that they were held as being specially friends and intimates. As no one else lived anything like so near them as they lived to each other, this seemed merely natural. When two people who like one another perceive that their mutual friendship is taken for granted, as a first principle, by others, it is not unpleasant.

"Philip Andros and the duchessa are *au mieux*, don't you think?" Lady Marjory remarked to the Master.

"Evidently. It's about time there was a hostess at Andros."

"He's lucky," said the girl. "A bit of a stick, eh?"

"Not a bit of a stick. His superiority is all on the surface. He's a first-rate fellow, really."

"My father says he ought to be member for North Rentshire — since my brother Chalkdown won't hear of politics; when papa says any one ought to be in Parliament they are generally deadly."

"I hope he doesn't think *I* ought to be."

"Oh dear, no! He says it is such a good thing you know your limitations. *Your* father, of course, didn't, for he got in for North Rentshire when papa himself was thinking of it — while grandpapa was making up his mind if he would pay the bill."

Sir Humphrey grinned; but he said to himself, "Cheeky old beggar." For, though he had not the smallest desire to be in Parliament, he naturally felt that he would make as good a member as another if the idea had happened to appeal to him.

"All the same, I know a bit about it," he observed. "Small holdings, now; there's not much to be said about them that I couldn't say as well, say, as your brother Chalkdown.

"I like large holdings," said Lady Marjory with obvious sincerity. "Any one who likes can have the small ones."

"There's Pounder's Withy Bed," remarked Sir Humphrey, and his eye immediately became more business-like, and Lady Marjory felt that their *tête-à-tête* was over.

She had not, of course, expected that the Master would propose to her on the way to Pounder's Withy Bed, though she was now rightly convinced that he would do so some time. Nobody in North Rentshire was ever in a hurry. They all lived within reasonable distance of each other, and no rightly constituted North Rentcestrian thought much of people who lived in other counties, or even in the southern division of their own. In South Rentshire there are manufacturing towns, and even its country families are a thought con-

taminated. The member for South Rentshire has often been a Conservative, but he has oftener been a Liberal; while North Rentshire returns only Tory members, or else Whiggish magnates more exclusive than the most Conservative buttonmaker ever produced by Renthampton, or the would-be-est Tory younger son of Lord Southrent, or Lord Rentdown. Lord Southrent might choose to be descended from Hamo de Bouton, who came over with William the Conqueror (though it was kept dark till Burke broke the silence of eight hundred years in his edition of 1895), but North Rentshire only remembered that his grandpapa "made shirt buttons"; and Lord Rentdown might vote Tory till his eyes jumped out, but your true Rentcestrian never forgot that his father was old Sir Timothy Stodge, though the present peer's daughter, the Honourable Plantageneta St. Oge, might have married ten American millionaires instead of two for all North Rentshire cared. Principle still clings to Rentchester, and all the "progress" in the world bothered it as little as Beachy Head is bothered by a high tide — the highest tide that ever rose became a low tide presently.

County feeling in North Rentshire breasts is firm rather than acquisitive. When the member for Renthampton became Chancellor of the Duchy of York, and was confidently expected to be made Chancellor of the Exchequer soon, a London paper spoke of him as a Rentshire man, and complimented the county on having produced within a short generation two such statesmen as Mr. Talkington and Lord James Fustle. The head of the great Whig house of Fustle, reading this, almost foamed at the mouth.

"Rentshire man!" snorted the Marquess of Rentminster. "Little Tommy Talkington a Rentshire man! Good Lord! what will newspapers say next? A Renthampton attorney's son a Rentshire man!

Why, his father was not thought good enough to draw up Tipp's will for her — our old housekeeper Tipp, who showed the castle to tourists. And they talk of my uncle and this tub-thumper in one breath, and congratulate us on two such Rentshire men."

It will be remembered that for two centuries and a half the Fustles have been Whig, and have voted for more Reform Bills than any other family in England. If the Marquess of Rentminster felt thus deeply on the insulted majesty of his county, what, it may be asked, must have been the annoyance of such Rencestrian Tories as Lord Chiltern and Sir Humphrey? They felt much less.

"He's impossible," quoth Lord Chiltern. "But old Talkington, the attorney, is a decent fellow, and his brother married Aunt Chalkdown's maid.[1] He'd been butler at the palace, and old Bishop Sloughly thought well of him; they were able to give their son an education — that was before Bishop Cope's school was reformed away; and so now the grandson is one of his Majesty's ministers. It's no use Rentminster bellowing — the fellow is the result of all the . . . Reform Bills the Fustles have been so fond of."

[1] Roland Mendip, fifth Earl of Chiltern, had nine daughters by his first Countess. On her decease he married Lady Hermione Thistledown, by whom he had two sons, Ralph Lord Chalkdown, *d.s.p.*, whose widow was Aunt Chalkdown of the text, and Orlando, father of the present Earl.

CHAPTER XLI

At Pounder's Withy Bed they did not get away so quickly as had been the case at Cloudy Scrub; nor when they did get away was it so neatly. There was certainly a fox there.

"That I'll lay to," Mr. Chass declared to himself; and Mr. Chass never offered himself wagers without good reason.

But the fox pursued tedious and annoying tactics. The biggest half of the Withy Bed lies along the south side of a long, narrow arm of Sedgemere, and it was that side they drew; but a smaller and denser half of the brake continues on the north bank of the water. Owing to the curve the intervening water is not visible from either end of the Withy Bed, and into the Withy Bed itself no horse can get either on the north or south side, the osier-growth being too dense, and the water generally too deep; so that the hounds must go in alone, and are very soon out of sight. The fox to-day was on the south side of the water, but he slipped away and started to swim for the other side without any hound viewing him. The scent, fresh as it was, was terribly broken, there being so much water and ooze: even when the hounds had followed it to the edge of the creek they might have been at fault, but one of them viewed Reynard just sneaking out of the water on the far bank; she gave tongue and instantly dashed after him, followed by the rest. But the fox repeated his manœuvre and doubled back, swimming the creek again nearer to the lake, and instead of getting back into the Withy Bed ran along under the bank of the mere, well

hidden, and got a long start. In the lake itself there was a small islet, covered with scrub, and perhaps he thought first of swimming out to this; if he did he changed his mind, keeping to the bank, which was getting lower and afforded less cover. At last he was viewed, and by the Master himself, but the hounds were only just back on the south side, after their second swim, and a good deal of their keenness had now been washed out of them, and the scent was queer. Sir Humphrey did get them together, and when they also viewed the fox they seemed nearly as keen as ever. But Sir Humphrey had only half his reduced field with him: Sam was there, Lady Marjory was there, and so were Gill and Philip, but the rest were mostly on the far side of the Withy Bed, with Mr. Chass, or hanging about at the western end of the creek where it stopped. The horn brought them hurrying round, but they were all more or less late, and not all of them picked up. When Reynard left the mere-side he dashed across a newly-ploughed field, heavy and sticky; afterwards, for three hundred yards, he kept along a narrow lynch between turnips and a lean stubble; then came a huge meadow, which those who reached found very welcome going after the plough and the stubble, that after a rainy night was sticky too. The field was small, but hounds were now going well, as if, now its chill was thrown off, their cooling had rather freshened them. In spite of his long start Reynard had chosen a line of flight that left him constantly in view, so that the poorness of the wet scent did him no good, nor was the scent now so queer as it had been. His course lay almost straight for Moat, and Gill was beginning to recognise familiar landmarks.

"It's rather civil of him," she thought, "to be bringing us so near home."

But the pace was too good and the business too

genuine for any chance of her making this remark aloud to Philip, who was nearest to her.

She had never enjoyed anything better in her life, and the glow of her countenance flattered her beauty. Even at that exciting moment Andros felt it, and told himself that she was lovelier than he had half realised. It is a mistake to pretend that every beautiful woman looks more beautiful on horseback; the dress is in reality trying, and many a girl, who is undoubtedly pretty in soft draperies, cannot stand the hard simplicity of a habit. But Gill was not merely pretty; and the animation of expression that the rapid movement and interest gave her, the light it lent to her strange and usually silent eyes, the bright but delicate colour it called into her pale cheeks, almost exaggerated her real claim to beauty, which never needed exaggeration.

The ground humped up a long slope into what had once been open down, but was now enclosed in moderate-sized pastures, and fox and hounds disappeared over the brow of the hill, Sir Humphrey, Sam Boligs, Mr. Chass (who had made up his arrears), Lady Marjory, and one or two of the best, disappearing one by one after them.

Gill and Philip were the last of that division, the few others having again tried a short cut which, they flattered themselves, would save the hill — nor this time were they all wrong — but these had turned off a minute or two before. At the brow of the hill Gill and Philip were alone.

"It's pretty steep going down. All right, I hope?" he said, letting her come quite alongside.

"Yes," she answered rather breathlessly.

She suspected her mare was a bit done, but would not say so.

Down they went, over chalky grass, smooth and

almost too easy, for the slope was pretty sharp. Not far in front was a "belt"— a line of windy firs — behind which fox and hounds and field were already out of sight, but not really far ahead.

Along the bottom of the field ran a dyke between it and the trees, and over this every one had gone. They must go over it too. Nor did it look hard — more of a scramble than a jump.

"Here, I think," said Andros, getting a little ahead to give a lead. And Gill followed, but not right behind, thinking herself too close, and believing that it was just as easy a bit to the left. Nor was she wrong; her mare got over almost without effort, hardly jumping — something between a stride and a scramble.

But Philip was less lucky.

His horse was not beat, but was getting tired, and had long ago got excited: he jumped and cleared the dyke, but landed heavily in a twisted coil of barbed wire that had been removed from the dyke-top, and was rolled up into a tangle in a bundle of thorn and brush that almost hid it. He hurt himself very little, except for the tearing and scratches of the barbs, but his rider was thrown heavily and strongly against a pile of flints, his hat flying off before he fell. Gill got over so nearly at the same moment that she saw it all, and her day's hunting was over. Of the run she thought no more. Quick as the pace had been, she was able to pull up her tired mount within a few seconds, and came back instantly.

A man came running up out of the trees, and she slipped out of the saddle quickly, and gave her mare to him.

It was Mark Herrick, but she barely noticed who it was.

"Take her," she said breathlessly, flinging him the

reins, and Mark could only note the agony and horror of her face.

Philip's horse was staggering, almost rolling, in his efforts to rise free of the mesh of barbed wire, but Gill could not think of the horse, and Mark had to do the best he could with both horses. Gill's was not unwilling to stand still, and Mark quickly saw this, and left her to herself: to get the other, frightened and excited, to his feet and free of the wire was much more difficult.

Gill was bending over Philip, who was really stunned, and whom she feared was killed.

"What does the horse matter?" she cried out, which may have shown that she was not yet quite an English sportswoman. "Mark!"

She turned her ghastly face to Herrick, and he knew she was asking if the squire was really dead. If he could have been himself dead he would not have minded, if but she could have looked like that for him.

He did not for a moment believe that Mr. Andros was dead, though, in fact, he could know nothing about it. It seemed to him quite certain that Fate would not really spoil her own cold plan. Having wealth and station, Fate would fling into his hands all the rest.

Nor was Philip dead: neither dead nor deaf, he heard Gill's appeal, and when his eyes opened he saw the same anguish in her face as had sounded in her voice — saw it before she knew the eyes had opened, before she had even begun to think of being mistress of herself. In death there are no disguises, no conventions. And with death, as she thought, standing between him and her, her face and her voice told the same plain tale.

At that moment hunting seemed to her the silliest way of wasting life. To chase a fox to his death why should a man's life be thrown away — at no call of duty

or patriotism? Herself, too, she blamed, almost execrated: but for her, Philip would have been with the rest of them.

"Mark," she almost wailed, "leave that horse and come here. Can we do nothing?"

"The horse'll do now," said Herrick. "Take my word for it, the squire'll do too."

His tone was almost bitter, but Gill simply did not notice it. She had no thought for Mark at all, and all her face and all her voice showed it.

Nevertheless it was to Mark her face was turned, appealing for help, but not so turned but that Philip saw it. Dazed he was, half-stunned still; full of pain, for his arm was broken: but he saw, and he knew; and the pain did not matter.

"Gill," he whispered, "I'm all right."

It was almost a whisper; Mark could not hear it, though he saw; but Gill heard.

"Oh, Philip!" was all she could say; but more than enough, as she quickly turned all the misery and gladness of her eyes on him.

They both knew; just as Mark knew. The long, slow stupidity of acquaintance had all melted into the exquisite certainty of each other that neither had dared to forecast or suspect.

"I'll lead the two horses home," said Mark roughly. "And they'll come up from Andros to bring the squire back."

He did not pretend the least solicitude. He left all solicitude to Gill, to whom it belonged. Civil and solicitous he could not be.

"All the same I'm alive, and she's there for me to see her," he said to himself, as he led the two tired horses through the "belt" and down the hill home.

Neither Gill nor Philip was thinking of him, though he was taken up with the thought of them.

"You are sure you are not killed?" she asked, laughing low, and quite conscious that she had no business to be so happy.

"Not so far as I am aware, by any means." And he laughed too, with no misgivings as to the propriety of his being happier than he had ever been in his life. All the same his arm was broken, and his head had had a bad knock. Happy as he was, he was in pain; not that pain matters when one *is* happy.

"I shall require nursing," he observed coolly. "Ribstone has been telling me all my life what a splendid nurse she is; now's her chance."

Mrs. Ribstone had been housekeeper at Andros almost ever since Philip could remember.

"No, it isn't. Ribstone looks almost seventy, and she has forgotten all about it. *I* shall nurse you."

Neither of them knew in the least whether it would be considered proper for him to be nursed by his future wife or no.

"I could telegraph for my aunt," he suggested; "then it might be all right."

"Lady Oscathorpe could no more nurse anybody than she could write the Thirty-nine Articles," Gill protested; but perhaps Philip was not thinking of her as a nurse.

As a matter of fact Lady Oscathorpe did come, and to the day of her death attributed her nephew's speedy recovery to her skill and tact.

"It's all tact," she explained. "Nurses are *common*, my dear, that's what's the matter with them; and they love the *éclat* of a fatal illness. There's no tragedy in recovery. To have been in at the death exalts their prestige. Nurse Buddle, who gently but firmly handed poor papa into his coffin, used to brag of all the last scenes she'd assisted at. The Duke of Walsall expired while asking her what o'clock it was. 'Quarter to four,

your Grace, by the day; but your Grace's timepiece is a little forward,' she was telling him; but his Grace was gone before he realised whether it was really a quarter to four or not. And he left her a hundred pounds. If he had got well he would not have left her a penny. Lord Billingsgate died under her auspices too, just as he was wondering what the deuce that new medicine tasted like. 'Ketchup, my lady; but he never knew, for his lordship was hard of hearing, and I'd told him twice without his catching, and he was gone before the third time was out of my mouth.' I never bothered Philip, or gave him medicine, or took his temperature. I merely chatted. What's the *good* of taking people's temperature? When it's a hot day one doesn't get cooler by knowing it is ninety-six in the shade. I just talked about cheerful things, and about old Lady Stillingfleet whom he detests, and saw that no invalid atrocities were sent for him to eat. If he seemed serious I played the fool till he cheered up, and if he wanted to be grumpy I first gave him something to be grumpy about. A sick person *hates* to feel he's cross without any reason — it makes him suspect he's out of sorts. If a man feels inclined to throw a jug at you it flatters him to feel strong enough to do it. Over and over again I made Phil want to murder me — and dying people don't think of such things. It *never* does to allow a sick person to fall into meekness and submission. It suggests morbid notions — for no healthy man ever was meek yet. 'As meek as Moses!' Why, if ever a man had a temper!"

CHAPTER XLII

North Rentshire could never make up its mind collectively whether Philip Andros had proposed to the duchessa before his accident or after it. It was suggested by one flippant gossip that he was in the very act at the moment the accident occurred, and the "cropper" he came was accounted for by his excitement and consequent lack of attention. But this fantastic theory met with no supporters. Most people declared that they were engaged already, and that it had been obvious at the meet itself. The rest were divided into two parties, one of which was sure that he proposed "the moment he recovered consciousness after his spill"; the other that he did it during his short illness afterwards, while Lady Oscathorpe thought she was nursing him, and Gill was really doing so.

To tell the truth, he never exactly proposed at all. Perhaps this is not uncommon. By the time a definite proposal might be looked for it has often become superfluous. Once Philip knew that Gillian loved him, he took it for granted that she would marry him, just as he thought it unnecessary to state in words that he wanted to marry her.

Of his great happiness he spoke soon and often, so that, long before his complete recovery, Gill had grown accustomed to hearing him take their marriage for granted.

If the reader will understand this it may help him to excuse the one act of Gill's life that is least likely to be excused by the novel-reader who expects perfection in a heroine. Unfortunately there is no heroine in this

book; and from perfection poor Gill was immeasurably distant. In real life a girl may marry twice without greatly loving either the first or the second husband at the moment of marrying; but she is not a perfect character, and her imperfection is the inevitable penalty she must pay, whatever other deserved penalties she may in fact escape.

And this penalty Gill paid also. Her character had never been perfect, and it could not be elevated by what she did; on the contrary, it gathered a sort of twist or bend, that her real love for Philip, and the improvement due to her dawning sense of faith and religion, had not had time entirely to straighten.

She found herself regarded by Philip Andros as his betrothed wife before she had any opportunity of telling him her whole story; and certainly she need never have told him that story if he had not asked her to marry him. The recollection of her false marriage with Eustachio, and of his desertion and re-marriage, were so intolerable to her that she had chosen it should not remain a remembrance at all. It was a leaf torn out of her life and burned, though the burning itself had taken long, and had been cruel and hard. It concerned no one but herself, and was undoubtedly her own secret — until Philip wanted to marry her. It must be assumed at once that she could never really have forgotten; to refuse to remember is not to forget. Nor was she at all likely to forget now that Philip spoke, fifty times a day, of their own speedy marriage. Nevertheless at first she could not tell him, and afterwards she did not. And, though this may seem harder to believe, she was not thinking of that past episode in her life nearly so much as the reader is probably thinking of it. Her thoughts were of Philip and of herself, and of their united future; that hateful experience of the past was a shadow of a day long set.

Philip certainly did not wish her to be talking of her married life with the old Duca di Torre Greca: she was a widow and he knew it, but men who marry widows are not desirous of being perpetually reminded that there has been a predecessor — and Gill, even if her marriage with Eustachio had been a legal union, and she had not married the old duke at all, would now have been a widow, for she had read of Signor Zante's death several weeks before she had married Torre Greca. The notice had been brief but circumstantial: Signor E. Zante, consul-general of his Hellenic Majesty at San Francisco, who had married the wealthy Miss Irene Vanderblister, only daughter of Bildad Q. Vanderblister, known as the Sulphate Sultan, had died of heart-failure after less than six months of wedded felicity. Gill did not, in fact, talk of her previous life; she neither wanted to talk of it or think of it. It all seemed to her of a piece, flat and stale, unprofitable; her hopes were pinned to the future, as alas! all our hopes are, without our always realising that the future can only be the result and fruit of our past and present.

Gill married Philip Andros without even mentioning to him Eustachio Zante's name; and for that the reader may not excuse her. If the reader could I would not; I am not poor Gill's apologist, but simply her chronicler. She sowed a bad seed, and she deserved a bad harvest. If her punishment came in part here, that I do not take to be an example of inexorable Fate, but an intimation of Divine mercy. Otherwise the wound she inflicted on her own character would have gone unhealed into a greater world than this.

Had Gill asked advice of the only person she knew intimately except Philip himself, Father Pope, no doubt she would have acted differently. But to do that simply did not occur to her. Never having had any one to advise her, she had never acquired the habit of seeking

advice. Nor had she ever, even in Confession, alluded to her first marriage, to the priest. By ignorant persons, who never themselves go to Confession, it is sometimes suspected that women are apt to confess other people's sins quite as readily as their own; which is the real reason for much of their dislike of the confessional. If some women do that, Gill at all events was not one of them. She neither went to Confession to indulge in a pious gossip, or a personal gossip; and confined herself strictly to her own sins. Now in the matter of her marriage with Eustachio, she had been sinned against, but had not, as she had thought, committed any sin herself.

Thus, not telling Philip anything about that hateful episode, she married him simply as the widow of the Duca di Torre Greca.

North Rentshire had had another pre-occupation — would she drop her title and henceforth be known as Mrs. Andros? But this question was settled in a way that North Rentshire had not taken into its calculations. For a few days before her marriage, her kinsman, Lord Glentilt, died, and she succeeded to his Scottish honours, and to nearly all his estates: so that it was not in her to become Mrs. Philip Andros.

As her father's cousin was not a near relation, and she had never even seen him, neither she nor Philip saw any reason for putting off their marriage, though Lord Glentilt's death gave a reason for making the ceremony a quiet one, as it suited both their tastes that it should be. When a widow marries again, the wedding should not have the pomp and circumstance of the first marriage, and Lady Oscathorpe, who quite felt this, was grateful to Lord Glentilt for his choice of a moment to depart out of this troublesome world, which had never troubled Lady Oscathorpe in the least.

On the one hand, Lady Oscathorpe had an idea that

Andros of Andros was such a high personage that his marriage should be an affair of proportionate consequence; on the other, it could not seem unfit that a lady who had just succeeded to a peerage should show her respect for her predecessor by marrying very quietly, when the ceremony had to take place a day or two after his funeral.

Philip himself was not quite so grateful to Lord Glentilt. None of the Andros family had ever been averse to wealthy wives, and the present squire was much too sensible to object, in the abstract, to his own wife being rich. But he had very firm principles as to the duties of property, and at first he was not sure that her accession to considerable estates was an unmixed advantage. He certainly did not wish for two homes, and Andros must be his home and hers. Nevertheless he did not care for the idea that by her marriage his wife should become an absentee proprietor.

To some extent this difficulty was settled for the moment; for the late Lord Glentilt's widow was a rich woman, and her wealth consisted in money, not in land, and it soon turned out that she would be very glad to go on living at Thesiger Castle as Gill's tenant, where she would be able to spend quite as much, to the comfort of the neighbourhood, as Gill could have spent had she not married Philip, and had gone to live there as a widow on her own means. Thesiger is not in Scotland but in Milkshire; on the Scottish estates, which were inconsiderable, there was only a shooting-lodge, to which Philip and his wife might very well betake themselves for a month or two every autumn.

North Rentshire was not cross with Gill for becoming a Scottish peeress; to be an Italian duchessa had been felt to be a stretch of exoticism which only her personal attractions could condone: but to develop into a sort of Scotchwoman was an attempt at being Eng-

lish, which must be regarded with approval. That she had all along been Miss Thesiger by birth, was now almost beginning to be remembered. And Thesiger is a Milkshire name; and Milkshire, though a small county, is all grass, with as pretty hunting as any North Rentshire itself could boast.

Even Lady Merle counted it to Gill for righteousness that she had thus shown some real claim to the position of wife of Philip Andros of Andros. And Lady Merle thought it greatly meritorious to have brought another peerage into the fold of the Church. To be a peeress was much, but to be the first Catholic peeress of one's line seemed to Lady Merle to be almost everything that a woman could do in the way of advancing the interests of religion. She was a just, though prejudiced woman, and she at once admitted that this was more than she herself had been able to do; she had become a Catholic, and so had Gill, but *she* had merely married a peer who had been Catholic all along, while Gill had converted a peerage.

Winifride was more prejudiced than her mother, and considered herself more logical: she could not at once perceive that Gill's faults had been done away with by her change of title. But Lady Merle snubbed her eldest daughter's first attempt to express this feeling. No doubt there are spots on the sun, but it is not well to examine them with the naked eye.

Angela, who was much in the habit of being snubbed by her sister, but not at all in the habit of submitting to it, was not magnanimous enough to be displeased at beholding the tables thus turned. She herself did not affect either logic or abstract justice, but was content if those she regarded as friends got fair play. On her wedding day Gill was duly kissed by all three; but Winifride's kiss was rather official than personal — a recognition of a new relationship by marriage, and of

the fact that relations should be on good terms with each other, family quarrels being of abominable taste. Lady Merle's embrace was more than affectionate: it breathed unction and had a religious emphasis. Angela merely hugged her friend, and almost rubbed noses with her. But Angela was not on the plane of taste, and knew very little about unction: her affections were chiefly a matter of liking, and did not wait for supernatural guarantees.

BOOK IV

CHAPTER XLIII

Gill and Philip were so happy in their married life that their popularity grew immensely: a thoroughly contented couple is a contribution to any neighbourhood. Andros became more important, for though it had not been shut up it could only be a bachelor house: and now Gillian did the honours so satisfactorily that in a very short time it became difficult for any one to imagine the place without her. Houses like Andros have so permanent an air themselves that their occupants seem clad in the same idea of permanence, though they be as transient as their contemporaries in town flats or suburban semi-detached "villas"— what a degradation of that Italian word villa is our use of it! If there be any villas in England at all, there is certainly not one called by the name.

The mistress of Andros Court had always been of consequence in North Rentshire, but none of her predecessors had ever been of more importance than Gill. But, though she and her husband went everywhere they ought to go, and were as hospitable at home as any of their neighbours, nevertheless their real life was personal and private. It was what both wished, and in their circumstances it was not difficult to do as they desired. Those who live in a big country-house, with wide estates of their own, whose neighbours also live in similar houses, surrounded by similar large properties, are not exposed to the shallow publicity of incessant

running in and out that must be the bane of a suburban "society," and to a less extent of those who live in towns.

The only person who dropped in was Father Pope, and they were both of them glad to see him, no matter how often he came — for not only was he himself pleasant, but he never came idly. Your intolerable dropper-in is he who comes because he has no business, not because he has some. Father Pope was shrewd, with just a twang of eccentricity in his shrewdness to save it from settling down into mere common-sense.

He was not much in the habit of talking about people: "it doesn't do to be uncharitable," he declared. But in spite of the somewhat pessimistic sound of this, he was not a pessimist except in politics: the political parties were one nearly as bad as the other, and all suspects; the politicians quacks, and their nostrums about as valuable as patent medicines. He always congratulated Philip on never having entered Parliament.

"A respectable man can't do with more than one conscience," he declared. "When he tries two the party conscience is apt to get the upper hand."

He stoutly denied that party government formed part of the Divine revelation, and flouted the idea of accepting it as a first principle.

"It isn't really a principle at all," he said, "but a series of triennial or septennial truces between two principles, neither of which may be right. One party is to have its fling for so long, on the understanding that the other party has its fling. Party government is the apotheosis of the Englishman's detestation of logic."

"It is supposed to acknowledge the right of the people to change its mind — or in other words to learn."

"The will of the people! The will of my grandmother! Mr. Andros, you are not so simple as to believe that the will of the people has anything to do with

it. It's the will of Mr. Gladstone for so long, and the will of Lord Salisbury for so long."

"Mr. Gladstone 'for so long' is the mouthpiece of the people, and then Lord Salisbury is the mouthpiece 'for so long.'"

"Is he so? The people's words sound uncommon different, then, in Mr. Gladstone's mouth, or in Lord Salisbury's, from what they sounded at the hustings, and in the yelping crowds round the polling-booths."

"I believe Father Pope is a much more genuine Tory than you are, Phil," said Gill, laughing.

"Mr. Andros is not a Tory at all, Lady Glentilt, but only a Conservative, and that's a Whig with one eye on the populace: to do them justice the old Whigs didn't care a rap for the people. They knew better."

Now Father Pope had spent all his life working hard among the people, and he found them good enough individually, often better than any reasonable man could have expected: he liked them, and they liked him; but he had no illusions, and refused to enthrone them. One by one they were decent, for the most part, and he knew all their limitations and incapacities without being scandalised by them, but he did not venerate them in the mass.

"Tennyson was not libelling them," he would declare, "when he made the Northern farmer say:

'Täake my word for it, Sammy, the poor in a loomp is bad.'

They never should be taken in the lump. *Vox populi vox Dei* — the worst lie that ever got patented in a proverb. That wicked nonsense lies at the root of government 'by the people, for the people'; and so of modern party government, which means the cajolery of the people; nothing on earth that is really governed at all is governed by the people. Do the people govern the Church, or the Pope? Was ever an army governed

by the soldiers in it? Was ever a school that taught anything governed by the scholars? Was ever a ship commanded by the sailors? Why, even a mutinous crew of pirates choose a captain or go on the rocks!"

"Yes, but they do choose him. They obey him because they have elected to obey him."

"Out of all my instances you only try to make capital out of the pirates! Which is best managed, a pirate ship or a man-of-war? Does a regiment choose its own colonel? Does a school choose its own master? Does our army choose its own commander-in-chief? Do the laity choose their own Pope? The principle of majorities is not a principle at all, but a perverse forgetfulness of principle. . . . Who was in the majority on Calvary? . . . Was it Moses or the majority that made the golden calf? . . . Is God supreme because man chose Him to be supreme? Real supremacy can never come from below, even in temporal affairs. Napoleon was not supreme because the French made him so, but because it was given him from above. And so with all real monarchs; their rule is *not* derived from the people, though it may only continue at present largely because the people acquiesce in it; it is derived from some founder who was a genius, and who by his genius got the rule. But who made him a genius? Certainly not the people. The people can make nothing except a row; they never made a great man; and, when a great man has risen from among the people, he *has* risen and he has left them. All this worship of majorities is just as snobbish as the worship of wealth or the worship of rank, and more sickening, because it is not so sincere. Nobody *says* he worships money — he worships it; and no snob ever yet made a parade of his devout adoration of rank; as far as he can he conceals it. But the worship of majorities is loud and insincere. Like Hamlet's play queen, it protests too much."

Philip enjoyed these diatribes, and would put in a word to keep the ball rolling.

"Granting that government cannot be '*by* the people,' at all events directly, if it is to be, as you say, really government, and not anarchy, ought it not to be '*for* the people'?"

"Why? Government is not for *any* class; and government for the people, in the sense used now, would mean, and does mean, the favouring of one class at the expense of all the others. That is not less unjust and less absurd because the favoured class happens to be the lowest. And so when it really takes place it is not government, but cajolery of the lowest. Real government is for the *country*, not for one section of it, even the most ignorant, the least capable of a sane view of the common good. The people don't care sixpence for the common good — it is *goods* they think of; and no one can at present expect them to think of anything more important. Certainly no modern demagogue-Ministry can; it teaches them materialism, and need not be surprised if only the bribe of a sordid material advantage appeals to them."

"But, Father Pope, you are not angry with the growth of liberty?"

"'Liberty'! another of the shibboleths, like 'Education' and 'Temperance.' And 'growth'— what do you mean by growth? A swelling is a growth, and so is cancer; but it isn't growth in the sane sense. And much of the present growth of 'liberty' is only swelling, and has often been cancerous. 'The perfection of liberty is the perfection of law'; the modern preacher of 'liberty' is only a libertine. The Catholic Church has been the best guardian of liberty because she has been the best guardian of law."

"Oh, of course, if we were all as perfect as the

Church would make us we should need no liberty, because we should need no law."

"That is not true. In heaven we shall be perfect, and in heaven there will still be law, though there will be no lawbreakers. God's law is eternal, and holds good in eternity; but the law being perfect, and its observance being perfect, liberty will be perfect too. It is not the law which is temporal and transient, but the breaking of it. When St. Paul said, 'Transgression came by the law,' he was not accusing God of being the author of sin, but only explaining that the promulgation of the Eternal Law in time *exhibited* the shortcoming of the transgressor."

"Why do you talk of the shibboleth of 'education' — you, whose life is spent in trying to educate?"

"Because what I mean and what they mean are different. I want to 'lead out,' to e-ducate, what matters most, what is best: to make the sower's seed bring forth fruit. What they mean is to cram unfit bodies (for they take no count of the soul) with unfit food, and too much of it. Your Board-school schoolmaster is the most uneducated wretch alive — and it is not his fault, but the School Board's. His inside is not fed, but stuffed with raw potatoes of irrelevant so-called knowledge, as unwholesome for him as the 'knowledge' Adam got by eating the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. He cannot digest it, or assimilate it, but has to disgorge it undigested, unassimilated, into his luckless scholars, so that their poor insides are as bulgy and as hard as his own, rattling with raw peas of 'history' that is untrue and of 'science' that is going to be proved ignorant. I am told there is a society for the dissemination of ignorance. If I knew the address of the secretary I would join it. What an advantage in knowledge a few years' return to the lost 'ignorance'

of our forefathers would really be! We priests are accused of wishing to keep the people ignorant? I accept the accusation: the knowledge meant I do oppose. 'Facts' without faith; man, 'humanity,' without God — what a poor story! Our priests have been held up to the choice of history for knaves or fools because they refused to adore the bladder-god of the new knowledge, because they suspected its mission, and because they thought it unproven that the simple would gain by it. To believe in God, they fancied, might be better for the people than to believe every bombastic ignoramus who found what he thought was a hole in God's seamless garment. Poverty and faith and Divine love, they thought, was a finer endowment for a race than material prosperity arm-in-arm with unbelief on one side and class-hatreds on the other. The old ignorance was of indifferent detail: the new knowledge is ignorance of the essential substance. Probably ninety-nine per cent. of the 'facts' bolted by the Board schoolmaster are merely additions to his ignorance, for such ignorance is false belief, not limitation of information, and the teacher's stock of ignorance is multiplied as it is disseminated. Why, the old woman, who carried a mutton bone in her pocket because she imagined it would cure rheumatism, was less ignorant than the specialist who believes that God can cure nothing."

Vehement as these philippics sound, they were delivered with a placid urbanity that made them fifty times more amusing. Father Pope did not argue with the desperation of a man who knows all the world is against him, but with the serene amiability of one who seems to himself to be mouthing ancient truisms that no one ever denied, though some may have thought them too self-evident to be worth remembering.

"Being myself an uneducated person," Gill remarked, "it is consoling to hear that it doesn't matter. Not

being addicted to the bottle, I can hardly expect to be so much flattered by Father Pope's tirades against temperance."

"Now, Lady Glentilt, don't put words into my mouth till I've said them. I've nothing to say against temperance. St. Paul, when he pleaded before Felix, reasoned of temperance, but I'm thinking there was not a word said about total abstinence; if he had been a Nonconformist, with one leg in unbelief and the other on a platform, he would have talked of nothing else. Mind, I know drunkenness is beastly, but it's a beastliness that the Reformation made general and national. Before that it was an individual and personal shame; it was not the national vice of England, of Denmark, or of Scotland till those countries threw off the Church, and it isn't the national vice of Ireland now, though Ireland's too near to England not to have learned too much of it. It's no national vice of Italy, France, or Spain even yet, though the more those countries learn the lesson of disloyalty and unfaith, the more they go in for it. I'm suspecting that, just as some weak fellows drown their sorrows in drink, so peoples that have slipped, or are slipping, into the misery of unfaith try to cheer their gloom by the beastly remedy of drink. Faith and gloom are never bedfellows, but the death of faith brings such a blackness into men's hearts that the poor wretches clutch at whatever will make them cheerful for a moment. It's not the publican who drives the Mile End Road to gin, but Calvin and Luther; John Knox was enough to make a whole continent take to whisky, let alone Scotland; and Voltaire set France drinking, though he may, for all I care, have never tasted anything stronger than toast-and-water himself. Mankind insists on being happy; if it can't believe in the happiness God's Church promises it will run to the devil for whatever he has to give instead; if your drunken

drayman kicks to death his wife and his unborn son, it's as much Henry VIII.'s fault as his. Brutality can never be the monopoly of kings; abolish God, and man's being the image of God becomes a lie, and he insists on proving it. If there's no Divine source of law, why should man regard the law as Divine? Man *will* be logical —'Kill my God,' he says, 'and I shall kill myself if it amuses me. I'm my own, and if I like to waste my own stuff, why should *you* hinder me? If God has no rights, who else has any? The State? Why, the State is me and my mates. Humanity? Why, humanity means me and other people, and I take leave to think of myself first. Why shouldn't *I* be jolly? If it makes me jollier than you to bash my wife's head with the shovel, why, you've got a shovel too. Let *my* shovel alone. We're all equal, and my taste for shovel is my taste; if you prefer prayer meetings, go and pray; if you like the beauties of Nature, why, go and tell Nature you're mashed on her. 'The greatest good of the greatest number.' Tommy rot! *My* greatest good is my own greatest god. You don't think so. Well, who are you? Gawd Almighty, I suppose, in a boiled shirt and a red tie. Gawd Almighty, while He lasted, kep' His place. Keep yourn. Oh, you're not talkin' about religion, aren't yer? Jest talkin' for my good here below; all you want is to make me see I shall be better off, have more money to lay by, and better clothes to wear, and meat twice a day instead of twice a week, if only I'll give over drinking. And *you're* the Rev. Stiggins of New Jerusalem (capital of Old Jewry, I s'pose). Your father kep' the "People's Friend" pub. in the Ratcliff Highway, and that's why you can afford to set up as a people's friend on your own. P'r'aps if *your* dad had sold squarer tipple *my* dad might have lived longer. Meanwhile you likes jawing and I likes drink. S'pose I like drink better than

money laid by — *you* lay *your* money by, and let me alone. You likes black clothes, and I don't care a cuss what clothes I have, and I'd liever have my drop o' drink than meat twice a day. You stick to your cold tea, and leave me to my beer. I've only myself to please, just like you.' Bill Sikes is a brute, but who made him one? Teach man he is an animal only, and he sees no point in being more than an animal. If he is to grow up without learning he has a soul, why be shocked that he only considers what gives pleasure to his body? Morality without God is too much to expect. If there is a binding law, there must be a lawgiver, with the right and power to bind. If there is no lawgiver, there can be no law. 'Oh, but the State has the right to protect itself and its citizens by law.' Yes, but how if the citizens say they *are* the State, and don't care about the law, or only care about dodging it? What keeps society going is the remnant of inherited belief, habitual deference to a law that rested on a Divine sanction; when the belief is altogether obsolete the respect for law will be finally worn out. Then anarchy, the logical, inexorable child of the Reformation, outlaws the lawgiver, and flies abroad."

CHAPTER XLIV

Gill's life was now busy and happy, and Philip found that his wife relieved him of much of his labours. The management of a very large estate entails immense work for a proprietor who intends that it shall be managed properly; and Mr. Andros had very strong convictions as to his duties. He was determined that it should be a good thing for every one of his numerous tenantry that he should be a tenant on those estates; and yet, without being much of a political economist, he had no idea of spoiling his people, or letting "charity" demoralise them. Believing thoroughly in the rights of property, he did not regard himself as a robber for owning great estates; but he did realise that property is temporal, and that justice is eternal. Therefore he could not regard "rent" as a mere matter of income, and the difficulty of securing a fair rent is much greater than it seems. In many things he had to deal with money, though he cared for money as little as any sanely reasonable man could; and he was keenly alive to the risk that must attend any one whose business involves a constant attention to money. A great Christian landowner cannot treat wealth as a Franciscan friar and simply flee from it; but such an one as Andros knows he is a steward, and is more preoccupied with the equity of his stewardship than with the mere increase of its bulk; he is no more like a financier than he is like a friar.

"Gill," he said one day, "do you ever read in your good books about 'detachment'?"

"I don't read as many 'good books' as I ought.

Not that sort of good books. All good books seem good to me. You once told me of a duke (wasn't he a duke?) who said *Vanity Fair* was the best spiritual reading he knew. I find Dante spiritual reading, and even Cellini! Cellini teaches one what to *don't*."

Phil laughed, and she went on:

"All the same, I do read regular spiritual reading books; and I *have* come across 'detachment.' It means 'sitting loose,' doesn't it?"

"Exactly. That's what people like you and me have to do. We can't just throw our goods away, but we *can* sit loose to them. Only it doesn't come by nature. I don't think you care particularly about money?"

"No; but I've been poor enough to find it a relief to be poor no longer."

"Yes. And I who have never been poor can thoroughly understand the ease and comfort of being rich. It saves one a whole range of meannesses and temptations. But I don't *care* about money."

She knew he did not, and simply smiled at him to go on.

"What I do care about is the *place*. Every tree here is a friend, lifelong and beloved — not belonging to me, but I belonging to them; every bit of simple view, that no one else would call a view; every turn of the river; every field with the cows in it; every lift of the downs up to the sky."

"My rivals!" said Gill, smiling still. For she knew she had no rivals.

"No; but dearer because you also belong to them all now. Gill, my girl, that is the 'pride of life' for me — you, and it all. And so we come to 'detachment.' To love you and them, to love them more because they are your setting, is not 'imperfect.' If one must love all things and every one, how much more must one love what is by nature dearest, or else one is worse than a

heathen: but to love and be ready to yield up, to 'sit loose,' there is the difficulty and the duty."

She held out her hand, and he took it in his tenderly.

"I was not meaning," he said, "to speak of you, but of the *things;* only every road leads to you. And I cannot think of my love for this dear home without forgetting it in the thought of its centre and heart. . . . What I started to say was this: we cannot be meant not to love the beautiful gifts. It is a graceless child that undervalues his father's bounty. But the father's bounty lasts, and the gifts are used up, or we grow too old for them — and so one has to sit loose to them. You see me always occupied with Andros, and all that it means: do not think I forget how little hold I have on it all. I have to do the best I can with it, for the sake of those alive now, and for the sake, too, of those we hope will be alive when we are dead."

His hand on hers closed with a more tender pressure, for they knew that God was sending them the first of those whom they hoped would be alive when they were dead.

"Gill, I cannot bear that you should think me worldly."

"You worldly!"

"So much of my life is the business that this present state of things, what we call 'the world,' necessitates. I cannot bear that you should think me embedded in it. My talk is so often of all these matters, which are my business, just as truly as trade is the tradesman's, and work the workman's: I hate to seem to you over head and ears in our possessions!"

"You do not seem so. Even if you were — no one scolds the philanthropist for being absorbed in his pursuit, which may be half altruism and half a hobby; and a large part of your work is for other people's good,

quite as large as the part which is for the legitimate preservation of what is only yours or mine for our lives, and ought to be handed on to those to whom it belongs next as little depreciated in value as possible."

"I should not mind if I was scolded; scoldings from the ignorant outside would not worry me. It does not annoy me personally that I should be held up as a monster of aristocratic selfishness by some of the South Rentshire orators."

"Who never did a hand's turn for any one! Of course not. They say in Italy, 'When donkeys bray on earth the angels don't listen in heaven.'"

"But I'm not an angel in heaven. And I can't help *listening*. Unfair talk can't do good; nothing bad and unjust can be a matter of indifference — only it is not myself who is injured. In addition to the reasons we have mentioned, there is another why every landowner should do his best for the lands he holds — he owes it to his class. We do not make trades unions for our mutual protection, but we are just as much bound to think of the common good of our class as the artisan is bound to make unions to protect his. If you and I could afford to live on our 'money' we should still have no right to let all our tenants live rent-free. All these things one has to act upon as principles, and at the same time to 'sit loose.'"

"Here comes Father Pope. . . . You have arrived just in time to prevent our becoming too serious. Philip and I have been indulging in improving conversation. We are much oftener serious than you would imagine — it is only when you come that we laugh all the time."

Father Pope laughed now.

"I never accused Mr. Andros of not being serious. No one does. But it surprises me to hear that my

sensible remarks should make you laugh. It shows you do not understand them. I'm casting my pearls before . . . To-day I shall say nothing."

"Then I shall not ask you to stay to luncheon. What have you read in the papers?"

"There is nothing to read. A silly man is trying to get excited about the House of Lords. You might as well lose your temper with the Pyramids."

"Because the Pyramids wouldn't mind, or because they don't matter?"

"But they do matter. The House of Lords is the only really representative assembly you now have in England; for representation doesn't mean to represent *yourself*. The members of the House of Commons mostly misrepresent themselves — and nothing else in creation. Their business is to eat the words that got them there. The theory is that they represent taxation. The lords really do that. The stupidest lord is probably representative of more taxation than the stupidest M.P., and has, therefore, according to the theory of the sublime British Constitution, more right to speak. But as a rule the lords are not stupid, and their ideas as to property are apt to be sounder than those of 'the other place'; what's good for their property is uncommonly likely to be good for other people's, and they, at all events, have more probability of being sincere. They naturally care more for the property they have than the M.P. cares for the property he hasn't — but which his constituents are supposed to have, and to be taxed on. It always surprises me that the lords themselves sit down so meekly under the false imputation of their position that is ascribed to it. The head of the State must have money to carry on the rather expensive business of the State. So he calls on his lieges to provide it. Every one. The big lieges, who have much to give, and have to give it, come themselves and say what they

are able and willing to give. The little lieges, who have only a little to give, can't all come, because they are too busy, and because no room would hold them, so they pick out spokesmen, and send them up. But the object is the same — to give; and so the right is the same — to say how the money shall be spent. Why, then, are the lords to have no control of money bills? They are not really invited by the Sovereign to visit his palace of Westminster because they have the right to come there in coronets, but because they are about to be asked to *pay up*. The Lords' House represents so much taxation — and therefore they have a say as to what the taxation is to be spent on. They are not *merely* a Second Chamber; not *merely* intended to cry out, 'Wait a bit!' when the other place loses its head; though that has become their very useful and indispensable function. That function has grown up since the inaptitude and foolhardiness of the Commons has grown up, and the inflation of Cabinets, and it is now of paramount importance, the irresponsible character of the Commons having assumed such alarming characteristics. The lords have come to represent the common-sense of the nation, since common-sense has been alienated by the Lower House. Nevertheless if I were a peer I should protest against the rôle of a mere drag on a machine that had a perverse inclination for running downhill. The lords have their own right of representation — not a delegated right like that of the Commons, but a substantive, personal right. What has obscured this truth is the debasement of franchise — for it is debasement from the point of view of the theory of your glorious constitution. The member of Parliament does not really represent so much taxation, but so much talk. A peer has no vote for a member of Parliament. Why? Because he is supposed to represent his own taxation himself. He gives far more in taxes than all his tenants together,

but he must not vote for a member of Parliament because he goes up to say himself what he has to say as to the spending of the money he has paid to the State — and he must not now say it, because that would be interfering with a money-bill."

Though Philip was not himself a peer, this gospel was not the less to his taste.

"I am," he said laughing, "so very good that I can approve of rights that I do not happen to possess."

"In that sort of goodness people of your class are commonly better than the people with a big P. Perhaps it may be only because, though not the rose, you have lived near it. All the same I can't help admiring younger sons of the peerage class. A duke's second son may have only a few hundreds a year, but he doesn't cast sheep's eyes on his brother's thousands. He may like money as much as a bricklayer, but he can think of something else. . . . As a matter of fact you ought to be a peer; you have three times the qualification. When Lord —— said that every man with ten thousand a year had a right to be a peer, he did not merely mean that he was able to support the rank, but that he had the right to have a personal say as to how his share of taxation should be spent. Perhaps the qualification is too low. But on the theory of taxation and representation it is ridiculous that a man who pays a few shillings a year in taxes (on his tea, his beer, and his tobacco only) should have one vote towards the choice of his spokesman, and the man who pays hundreds a year indirect taxation, and a good deal besides on *his* beer, his tea, his tobacco, his carriages, his menservants, his coat of arms, his guns, his whisky, his wines, his houses, should have only one vote also. If England did not abhor logic, a commoner with fifty thousand a year would have five hundred votes if a man with a hundred a year has one. The man with fifty

thousand may be a poor creature, but he is taxed on his income just as much as if he were perfect, and the man with a hundred a year is taxed on his, though he may also be a poor creature. Men are not disfranchised because of their private misconduct, however public it may be: they pay their taxes, so they have their say. But why should the man who pays, all told, a pound per annum in taxes, have the same say as the man who pays, all told, a thousand a year in taxes? Of course a peer with a large income is different: he has his own personal say — so long as it is not maintained that he is to hold his tongue in his House about money-bills."

CHAPTER XLV

"The vicar is going to die," said Philip to his wife one morning. "I saw the doctor just now, and he says it is only a question of a few hours."

"Poor man; it must be some consolation to prove that he really was ill. When I came here first — to Moat — I remember everybody rather laughed at him for going abroad for his health."

"Should you like your friend Mr. Wentworth to get the living? I'm patron, you know."

"Yes, but you're not a Jew or a Buddhist, not even an atheist, only a Catholic: so you can't present. Father Pope has explained all that to me."

"No, I can't present. But the Bishop of Rentchester is an excellent friend of mine, and probably if I got Uncle Oscathorpe to write, and even wrote myself, to say I should like Wentworth to be vicar, he might get it. Of course it would be merely a favour on the bishop's part."

"Should you like Mr. Wentworth yourself?"

"Yes, very much. Do you think he would object? He is young, and he might wish to have a place with more work."

"I'm sure I don't know. I really know nothing at all about clergymen. He is not lazy, but I don't think he has any morbid passion for work."

Phil laughed.

"Well, some one must be vicar of these quiet rural parishes: and, as we have to be civil to this vicar, it is rather important for us to have a neighbour who is friendly and a gentleman. And then he and Father

Pope like each other; where the squire is a Catholic it is a blessing when the priest and the parson are not at daggers drawn."

Finally it was settled that if the vicar did die his nephew should be recommended by the patron of the living through his nominally Protestant uncle, who in reality cared much less for parsons than he cared for partridges. But Lord Oscathorpe liked gentlemen, and was anxious that his nephew should have one as vicar just outside his park gates. The bishop had no objection to gentlemen, and was one himself; Mr. Wentworth was a young man of excellent character, and his father had been up at Oxford at the same time as the bishop, and at the same college; they had indeed been friends, and his lordship was much too good-natured a man to dislike obliging at once an influential peer, a great county magnate, and the son of his affectionately forgotten friend.

So when the Vicar of Hinton Abbots died, the arrangements were easily made for him to be succeeded by his nephew. It was all so convenient that the late incumbent's widow naturally thought it providential, for Wentworth was just the man to take all her carpets and curtains, even if she had not been an aunt. He made no objection to the preferment on the score of the smallness of the population, for the living was rather valuable, and he was much less well-off than so estimable and well-born a young man deserved to be.

He wrote a pretty letter of thanks to Mr. Andros, in which he alluded to his approaching marriage as a circumstance that made the living peculiarly desirable. Philip and his wife had both seen the lady, a Miss Sibyl Porton, more or less a cousin of Lady Avonsbury.

"Oh, I remember her," said Gill. "She was staying there when I was. A tall girl with striking teeth and hair — but he didn't seem struck with them."

Philip laughed.

"He evidently was, though. I know her quite well. She will be too much occupied dressing herself to bother *our* poor people. The old lady used to have conscientious fits of trying to convert them."

So Mr. and Mrs. Wentworth came to Hinton Abbots and were excellent friends with their neighbours at Andros, though Mrs. Wentworth always told her husband, after driving there, that Lady Glentilt was wonderfully plain for a beauty, and Philip told his wife that you could never quite tell what a man was really worth till he married.

"One would have thought Wentworth deserved something less perpendicular."

"Perhaps he thought she would suit the church. He knows a little about architecture, and the church is Perpendicular too."

They were all good friends together. Lady Glentilt's second baby was nearly a year old when Mrs. Wentworth's first baby was born, and Gill was as kind and neighbourly as if she had been really a beauty, and gave unstinted admiration to the vicarage baby, which did not start in life with striking teeth, or even very striking hair. Mrs. Wentworth almost immediately made up her mind that the new Philip Andros would probably marry the new Sibyl Wentworth, and as she did not mention it to the small Philip's mother, or even to the small Sibyl's father, no one contradicted her.

"Gillian Andros is very civil," she would tell her husband. "It is nice of her to remember that cousin Penelope Avonsbury made up the match."

Mr. Wentworth laughed gently: partly because his wife never called Lady Glentilt by her Christian name except behind her back; partly because he saw it pleased her to say "Gillian Andros," which was not her name; and partly because he knew all about it.

"They have," Mrs. Wentworth would proceed, "the sense not to ask us to meet a crowd of parsons and parsons' wives. They see we are different. Now my cousin Penelope Avonsbury asks all the rectors and vicars within ten miles to dine once a year to meet each other, and so, she says, she gets through with them. I was half afraid the first time we dined that the Blowhards from Monk's Rentham or the Toogoods from Abbot's Broadchurch might be there. I know they do dine at Andros; Philip Andros being the patron, he has to. What a bore it must be! I am sure Philip Andros must be very grateful to the bishop for putting you here — fancy if we were Blowhards!"

"I rather like the Blowhards. He was champion middle-weight of Oxford once, though you would not think it; and she's as good a sort as ever had twelve children and asked you if she looked it."

"Mrs. Toogood said it was a long 'ride' from Abbot's Broadchurch here — in a pony-carriage, mind you."

"Well, Toogood is a cheerful person. He makes a joke, 'Not too good to be true,' he assured me."

Mrs. Wentworth shuddered and repeated:

"Well, that's what I say. Gillian Andros knows the difference. She would (though I shall always say her hair is simply red, and far too much of it) never dream of mixing us up with Toogoods and Blowhards."

"They're again working hard to get the squire to stand for North Rentshire," observed Mr. Wentworth, who had heard enough for the present of the difference between the Blowhards and Toogoods and himself and his wife. "He's by far the biggest squire in the county, and old Sir Welbore spends his time pairing like a dove."

"Of course Philip Andros will consent. He only wants to be urged. You may be sure he wants a peer-

age of his own. He would not care much for the next Andros of Andros to be Lord Glentilt. And those quiet-mannered men are always ambitious."

"He would not take a new peerage. His grandmother was co-heiress of the barony of De Braose, and her sisters had no children; he could be Lord de Braose to-morrow if he liked."

"It would cost £20,000 — I expect that's why he has not done it; men with that lip always hate spending money."

But Philip, either on account of his lip or in spite of his quiet manner, did not agree to the proposal that he should become member for North Rentshire in place of Sir Welbore Heavyside, nor did he take any steps to enforce his claims on the ancient barony of Braose. Whether his son were to be called Lord Glentilt or no, he was quite content to remain himself Andros of Andros.

CHAPTER XLVI

For more than four years the wedded life of Philip and his wife was so serenely happy that it is not the chronicler's fault if their annals were dull. There is no need to attempt a more detailed description.

One summer afternoon Gill was walking in the park, on her way home from visiting some poor people at Monk's Rentham, and all the homely beauty of the long-familiar scene was filling her with the tranquil delight it gave her in every season. Her way lay through a grove of beeches, whose smooth boles shone like gilded silver where the sun caught them.

Presently a distant view of the house, lordly and yet so home-like, appeared through the trees, and she looked towards it lovingly. There was her husband, there were her children — how sweet it was to get back to them even after so short an absence as this! Unconsciously she moved more quickly. The path now wound up a gentle slope, and at the top of it she saw Philip coming to meet her up the further incline.

He was not walking quickly, and his eyes were bent upon the ground. He too turned and looked kindly towards Andros, and somehow his attitude had an air of melancholy. Gill had so seldom seen him sad that she was at once troubled. But she could not watch him when he thought himself alone and unseen, and made some slight noise to attract his notice. He turned, and lifted his hat, as he always did when meeting her out of doors, and came hurriedly towards her.

His face was grave, and she felt at once, before they

were near enough to speak, that there was some trouble.

"Phil!" she cried, almost running to meet him. "Is anything the matter?"

"I am afraid so," he answered, with a look of misery that he could not master or disguise.

"The children! Is one of them ill? Has there been an accident? Do tell me quite plainly. Please do not try to prepare me. You do not mean — surely you do not mean — that *one of them has been killed.*"

She had grown deadly pale, and her lips trembled.

"No," he replied. "They are both quite well. I wish I *could* prepare you. There is trouble — for you and me and them."

"Oh, Phil! What can it be? We have no one else belonging to us very near and dear."

She thought of the Oscathorpes, whom she and he both loved, but even some accident to either of them would not, she felt sure, make him look like that.

"I came to meet you," he said, "knowing you would be sure to come home this way. There has been some one looking for you at Andros. He did not ask for me, but I happened to be crossing the hall, and saw him at the door, and hearing him ask for you, I went to speak to him. It was not my fault. I saw he looked like a gentleman, and simply went to see if he would leave any message, or come in and wait for you."

"What was his name? How could his coming bring me or any of us trouble? *Has* the trouble to do with his coming?"

Her big eyes were full of wonder; she was now almost more puzzled than alarmed, and yet an unknown, unexplained trouble that one hears of is generally more harassing than anything one can understand and weigh. Philip's eyes were not turned away, but the sadness in them did not lessen. Yet her total unconsciousness comforted him in some degree.

"Yes, he gave his name. And it is his coming that our trouble has to do with."

"What *is* his name?" she asked again, almost impatiently.

"He did not give his name to the footman — indeed, he had not time. I made him come in to the library, and then he told me his name. He seemed to expect that I would recognise it at once — but I had never heard it."

"What was it? Phil, why can you not tell me? There is no man living whose name it could possibly trouble me to hear."

There was no uncertainty in her voice, or in her manner: rather an air of growing impatience with all this mystification. Philip was well, the children were well; what was there to be in trouble about?

"His name, he said, is Eustachio Zante."

A sudden fierce glow shot up into Gill's face, and her very eyes seemed blushing.

"Phil," she cried out. "It cannot be. *He is dead.*"

At all events there had, evidently, been a Eustachio Zante well known to Gillian. That Philip could not, alas! fail to note.

"The man who gave me that name is alive enough. Who is he?"

"The real Eustachio Zante married me — as I thought. Then he left me and wrote that our marriage was illegal, and he married another woman, a rich American. Then I married the Duca di Torre Greca, but this man was already dead. The duke had found out that it was true about our marriage being illegal. But he was dead, dead then."

"How did you know he was dead?"

"I read of his death myself in a newspaper. He died at San Francisco; the date was given. It can be

proved; it may take a little time, but it can be ascertained."

"This man declares he is Eustachio Zante; and that he and you were married, at Tripoli in Barbary — just after your father's death."

"It was at Tripoli we were married — a few days after my father died. We had both known him well, and he was Greek consul there. It was in the consulate chapel we were married, by the Greek Poppos, the consulate chaplain. Then he left me . . . after some months, and did not come back, but wrote to say that our marriage was null, because it took place only in the Greek consulate chapel. It should have been also in the English consulate: that, he said, is the law. He himself married again at once, as I told you, an American lady with a great deal of money. As I said before, the Duca di Torre Greca knew all about it, and made full inquiries which proved that the law about marriage was as . . . as he . . . had said. But before the duke and I were married we had read of the death at San Francisco."

"You had told the duke all about it. Why did you not tell me?"

It was rather a cry, an exclamation, than a question.

"Alas, that I had! It was simply that the whole remembrance was so hateful: I had resolved to suffer no more the remembrance . . . he was dead, and we had never been married. But I had thought we were. I had no thought of marrying any one again when I met you. But I was a widow. And when at last we loved each other, I saw no reason why we should not marry — why you should not marry the Duca di Torre Greca's widow."

Philip did not question one word of the truth of all she told him. No one could have doubted her sincerity, and he was not a man given to doubt or sus-

picion. He remembered well all the man had said, and he knew that the man was a liar by nature, if not by profession. Nevertheless she had contradicted nothing the man had said; that she had married him, in the consulate chapel at Tripoli, just after her father's death: that the man was still alive Philip knew, though she had believed the contrary. As to the law of such marriages, between contracting parties of alien race, he happened to be quite ignorant. No doubt the Duca di Torre Greca had been satisfied — but then he believed that Zante was dead. Perhaps the technical law had seemed to him to matter very little, seeing that, whatever it might be, the man his proposed wife had married was no longer, as he thought, living.

"Is he — this man — still there?" she asked, looking with a swift wretched glance down towards what had been her home at Andros.

"No. He went away . . . but of course he will come back." Philip, as he spoke, turned and began to walk slowly homeward, continuing to talk as he moved, so that Gill had to walk beside him to listen. "He is perfectly civil and well-bred, but I am sure he will go on coming till he has seen you; nevertheless I will if you choose write to the address he left and tell him that you wish him to see me only."

Gill could easily see that though her husband made this offer he did not think she ought to accept it. Neither had she the least intention of accepting it. To see Eustachio Zante again would be almost intolerable, but she had no thought of sparing herself the meeting.

"Of course I will see him. I will write, or you can write if you prefer it, and make an appointment; but I would wish you to be present. Would you object?"

Philip said that he would not, though it was plain

that he hated the idea of seeing the man again. How could he help hating it?

There was a question which Gill found it hard to frame, but one which she would not shrink from putting into words.

"Did he," she asked, "explain his motive — his motive in coming: in wishing to see me at all?"

Philip turned almost with surprise, and met her eyes with his.

"You do not mean," she went on, "that he gave you the idea that he came to claim me as his wife?"

It was terribly hard for her to say this — Philip could see well how hard. But, though her beautiful face was still dyed with the blush that had never left it since she had heard of Zante's coming, she spoke bravely, and without the least shame.

"I suppose," he answered, "that is what he did mean to imply was his object."

"Perhaps he meant you to gather that impression. But did he say it was his object?"

She felt certain he had not said so: that he had trusted to her husband's confusion and trouble to imagine a claim he would not himself explicitly put in words.

"He knows quite well," she continued, "that he could make no such claim — that his marriage with me was no marriage. If he had not known it well he would have committed bigamy in marrying the American lady, who is not dead. Did he seem well off?"

Philip paused a moment to consider her words and her final question, and the suggestion it conveyed.

Men are often less sharp in such matters than women, and it was natural enough that he had not at the time been free enough in his thoughts to consider whether the man was rich or poor.

"How did he come? You say he came over from

Rentminster — that he gave that as his address," she asked.

"I think he walked."

"He would never walk a yard if he had money to drive. Did he ask you for money? No. But he will ask me. He never meant to ask you — his plan was to see me, and to ask me for money to go away again. Either you surprised his story out of him, which is unlikely, or he imagined *you* would offer him money to go away; perhaps he thought you would wish to spare me the knowledge of his being alive, and would buy his silence and departure. When he saw you had no such notion, he was too wise to propose it, and persisted in his demand to see me. But he gave you his address, perhaps in the belief that I would at once write to him and offer him money to go away, without seeing me. Of one thing I am sure: he did not, and he will not, dare to pretend that I am his wife."

CHAPTER XLVII

Gill sat alone in the great saloon at Andros, and it was very late. The night, though it was summer, was chilly, and it was raining pitilessly; there was a fire of logs upon the open hearth, and she gazed into its red heart, her own as chill as the rain outside.

Her husband had been engaged to go that evening to Rentchester, thirty miles away, for an important political meeting and banquet, and he had gone; so that she had the huge house to herself. The children were long ago in bed, and her maid had been sent to bed too. More than an hour ago she had told the men-servants that she wished to go on writing, and had bidden them not sit up.

To-morrow Philip was to return. But would he come back? Back not merely to Andros but to her?

Anger and repentance are uncouth companions, but she had to bear their ill-fitted companionship; for she was bitterly repentant, and not free from anger.

In these years of happiness and goodness she had improved, but she was still far away from perfection, and would, perhaps, always be. She could think of her own faults, and recognise them, not altogether glossing them over, or excusing them; but the faults of others she could see also, and feel their force of excuse for hers. That was why her repentance was bitter, for perfect penitence has no excuses and no bitterness. She knew well that Philip had deserved full confidence — far more than the Duca di Torre Greca had deserved it. But the old duke had met her confidence with pity, saying little, but showing that her terrible wrongs only

made her dearer to him. Philip had heard the story of her wrongs now, but had shown that he was too deeply conscious of the wrong she had done him in her withholden confidence to have much heart for compassion.

Then she remembered frankly (for she was always frank) that there was a vital difference. The duke had been told her story by herself before their marriage: Philip had found it out from some one else long after he had married her. By no word of hers had he been enlightened, by no such word might he have been enlightened had they lived together for fifty years. Yet again there was a difference — not against her; to tell the duke had been a common-place, plain duty; for when she told him Zante was, as she supposed, alive, and it was necessary that the old man who wished then to marry her should know that she had been married already — that he might judge of the matter. She herself had never doubted that the marriage in the Greek consulate was, as Zante had declared it, invalid, for she felt sure that he was too crafty to have married again, and announced his second marriage to her, if he had not been confident as to the law. Still it was for the duke to know and decide. He had thoroughly gone into it, and was satisfied as to the illegality of that Tripoli marriage, and willing to marry her even before either of them had heard of Zante's death. And he was a man who was as proud of his family and its honour as Andros himself could be — a Catholic too.

To tell Philip the story she hated to remember had not been such a plain affair of justice any longer. Nevertheless she knew well now that it was a duty she had owed him — and if she knew now, she might have known then.

Her own wrongdoing she did not deny to herself — she had longed to confess her bitter sense of it to Philip

himself to-day; but she could not — because it would have seemed like a cry for pardon, and she had not thought of pardon for herself. Now that she was found out, it was, she felt, a mere meanness to seek the comfort of his forgiveness. And would he have pardoned her?

She rose from her seat and paced the long room — repentant, but angry. Angry with herself, which is not penitence, and angry with Philip also. Was he not uncertain? Did he not seem to suppose that this stranger had some husband's claim on her?

When he went away to Rentchester he had come to make farewell: courteous, as he must always be, respectful, solicitous for her trouble, but divided from her. Not by one word had he proved that he knew she was his wife and his alone; that was the very thing that she saw he did not know — and should he not have known it? After all these years, did he not know her well enough to be sure that she would not have come to him to be his had there been the least shadow of doubt as to her right to come?

The old Duca di Torre Greca had not been devout like him; but he too was a Catholic, and a strict one — no man to take as his duchessa another man's wife, or one concerning whose right to be his own wife there could be the least uncertainty.

Up and down the great room Gill walked, sometimes pausing to look down into the fire, then moving on again. In the long mirror opposite the door her figure was now and then reflected — the most stately and beautiful of the Andros family portraits. And Philip was in doubt as to her right to be held as one of them!

Once, an hour ago, she had felt that the room had grown hot, stifling; and she had opened one of the big windows. Then it had grown colder, and she had shut it, but without closing the shutter. As she now walked

to and fro a man was watching her, not seeing her always, but only as she passed that one window, or when she stood still by the dying fire. Presently she sat down again, leaning forward with her hands held out before her, for they were very cold; her feet were cold too, and her heart was coldest of all. The man outside watched her, drawing now quite close to the window, heedless of the chill tears of the night. He was not a gentleman, and had none of the feeling that had made it seem to her like eavesdropping to watch her husband when he looked sorrowful and did now know that he was seen.

During all her talk with Philip, he had played eavesdropper, at first by sheer accident, and then with greedy anger — Mark!

Herrick had seen Gillian coming, though she had not seen him — indeed he was hidden from her by the thick undergrowth: he had stood quite still watching her approach, intending to come out and speak to her when she should have reached the top of the hill where he was. Then he had heard another footstep, and had seen Mr. Andros coming up from the other side, whereupon he gave up any idea of speaking to the squire's wife, or of showing himself at all.

He had singularly keen hearing, and almost all they each said had reached his ears. That they were both troubled he perceived at once, and understood, too, that their trouble . ivided them. Of course he took her part, and took it angrily, hating Andros for what seemed to him a chill and bloodless lack of sympathy with his wife.

When could she have needed sympathy — loving, eager husband's sympathy — more? From whom had she a better right to look for it? A villain was attacking them both, and was it not their common trouble, which they should have shared with tender, mutual sup-

port? But to him Andros seemed merely cold, a proud, hard man, absorbed by the thought of an injury to his pride and state, too deeply wounded in his own importance to care about what must be a worse trouble for her. Must it not be worse for her? If the scoundrel whom she had thought dead, whom she had married, and by whom she had been discarded, were really her husband, and had now come back, was it not worse for her than for Andros? If the children she had innocently borne him were what her cruel wrongs would make them, was it not harder for her than for their father? Her rank was at least as high as his: and must if not be more grievous for such a lady to find herself the mother of nameless children, than for him to have been their father?

Poor Mark was always more likely to be generous than to be merely just. He disliked the squire, and fancied that the squire disliked him, whereas Philip hardly ever thought about him at all, and neither liked nor disliked him. Mark Herrick never presented himself to Mr. Andros in any other light than as a rather odd protégé of his wife's, a wayward, somewhat erratic, peculiar young man. In truth, Mark's original character did not stand specially high in his neighbourhood. The gamekeepers had suspected him of poaching, not on very decisive evidence — perhaps on no better ground than his queer fancy for roaming the woods and fields at all hours of early morning and late night. His talk was unusual and his ideas were strange: and his father had certainly been a poacher.

Since his recovery from illness he had worked as a woodman on the Andros estate, and there had been no fault to find with his industry or sobriety, but the bailiff regarded him as a pet of her ladyship's, and told his wife, in conjugal confidence, that whether satisfactory or no, young Herrick would have to be kept on. This

was wholly unfair to Mark and to Gillian: she certainly would not have wished him to be employed by her husband if he were not worth his wages, and Herrick was far too proud to touch the squire's money without fully earning it. He was not particularly anxious to be employed on the estate at all.

CHAPTER XLVIII

When Philip and Gill had moved away together down the hill, Mark had no longer been able to hear what was said by either. He had heard more than enough.

Later on, he had seen the carriage take the squire to the station, and when night fell he began to roam around the house. The rain came, chill and stormy, blown in cold gusts by a north-east wind, but Mark still stuck to his lonely watch. He was restless, excited, angry, and torn by indignant pity for the helpless lady so lonely in her trouble.

When it grew very late, and he knew the household was abed, he drew nearer to the house, and came upon the smooth grass terrace that ran under the windows on one side of it. Presently he heard a shutter opening, and drew back, then a window, reaching to the ground, was flung open: after a long time it was closed again, the shutter being left still open: he crept nearer, and was able to see Gillian as she sat before the fire, or paced the room.

He was a man very liable to hatred, and he now bitterly hated two men — one who had made her think him her husband, one who was her husband now: and it was simpler to hate the latter because he knew him.

Gillian was not unjust to Philip as Mark was, though she was scarcely altogether just. She loved where Mark hated, and she understood where poor Herrick could not understand, or would not.

She never accused her husband in her thoughts of being absorbed in the sense of his own injuries, but

simply of being in doubt as to whether he were in fact her husband. For that she was angry with him: for it was a doubt of her. He should have been so sure of her as to leave no room for the least shade of doubt. He had known her for a half-a-dozen years, and might he not have learned by now that she was incapable of marrying him, of letting him marry her, if there could have been any doubt of her right to be his wife?

Of selfish preoccupation with his own personal, exclusively personal, position, she never accused him. She knew well that of her position he was thinking all the while; nevertheless it angered her that he should think of her as possibly not his wife, as possibly without the right to be his children's mother. If not his wife she herself might be arraigned as guilty of a bigamous marriage, of two bigamous marriages; and the blush that literally hurt her, that burned her eyes and not her throat and cheeks only, came back as she remembered it.

Nevertheless she blushed only at the thought of such a dread fear in her husband's mind. She had not the least personal fear of any public danger for herself. She was certain that Zante had come to make no threat of exposure, at all events that he would in fact dare no such exposure. If she could be accused of innocently committing bigamy, it could only be by avowing his having committed bigamy knowingly and deliberately himself. He had come simply for money; to be given money to go away and hold his tongue; perhaps to be pensioned, to go on receiving money regularly.

No doubt his American wife had found him out, and refused to have anything more to do with him. He had been turned adrift, and was now, perhaps only lately, at the end of his resources; that was why he had come only now. There had been nothing secret about

her marriage either with the duke or with Andros. He had probably been aware of both for many years. But only now had he shown himself — because only now did he need to make money out of his knowledge.

No, she did not accuse her husband of indifference to her personal share in their common trouble, but she was angry that he did not treat it as a trouble altogether common to them both. They were man and wife, and this trial was for them both together, whereas she felt that he looked upon it as a trouble for each of them apart — as it would be if he were not in truth her husband. She knew, unlike Mark, that he was tortured by the thought of her position if, after years of wedded life with him, she were in fact not his wife but that other man's, the mother of children who should never have been born.

And she knew that dearly, dearly as he had loved her, the children were now nearer still to his thoughts than he would let her be. He had said good-night to them also before he went away, and she had seen him through the open door of her dressing-room. They at least had done no wrong, and she had seen the expression of that thought in his tenderness of farewell. Their innocence was certain; she, at all events, had held back a confidence.

Oh purblind race of men! How bitter are the punishments we give ourselves, whereas God's are always tender and sweet, if we will take them with sweetness and tenderness. Her punishment was her fault, as so often our punishment is. Suppose she could awake, and find that all this misery since the afternoon were but a dream! — that Zante was dead, and had never come to Andros! — her fault would stick, and now she knew it as it was.

For deeper than all else in her husband's mind lay the bitterness of knowing that she had not told him;

that she had told old Torre Greca, and had not told him also. There was the real bar of division between him and her: not wounded pride but wounded confidence. She knew her husband thoroughly; his high-mindedness and his cool common-sense. He was intensely alive to every aspect of what had happened. That he, the head of the house of Andros, might be proved to have taken to wife a lady who could not be his wife; that his eldest son could not bear his name, or come to stand in his place; that the lady who had ruled his house these four years, had received his guests, and done the honours of his table, might perchance have had no wife's right — all this could not be absent from his bitter musings: but if she had at the first told him all, at least the bitterest of his musings would have been spared.

Once she arose abruptly from her seat by the now dead fire, and began her walk to and fro again with an air almost of decision.

Her lovely head was held more proudly, less tenderly. For when is pride tender? She would go. If he doubted of her being his wife, let her be gone. He could not, for manliness, bid her quit his house and table; let her save him such a pain. Not indecently, not with anger or tears, or display, but gently, decorously, with plausible explanation and reason — only, the explanation should follow the act; the reasons be given after the departure should have been effected.

She had estates of her own, tenants of her own — let her go and see to them: to-morrow's post might bring the pretended reason. He would not return till after midday; she might easily be far away before he came back, and no one need suspect anything. Great folk have great affairs, and may need to act unlike common household wives who must bide at home their lord's pleasure.

She knew perfectly how convenient to-night's business had been to him — that the necessity to sleep under another roof had been a relief to him. Why should she not afford him continuance of the relief? Was it not almost a duty of hers? He could not tell her that he hated to be with her, to see her playing mistress of Andros, till all this trouble were overblown. Let her go. Let him fetch her back if he wanted her back.

It was a great temptation, because, like all real temptations, it had so fair a show of reason and justice on its side.

But, angry as she was, she was Gill still, who loved him, and loved her children in him and him in them, and she could not.

Let him misdoubt her claim to be his wife, she would not, did not doubt it. Her place was here, let him even grudge it her in his uncertainty. And that other man was to be faced; she would face him here, in her husband's presence, and in her husband's house, not elsewhere. There should be not one word of private conference between him and her.

Let it be her punishment to go on acting as mistress here, though pride would urge how justly she might refuse such a burden now, until her husband himself, with plain words, told her that she was usurping nothing. She would be no other woman than his wife, no peeress, no independent mistress of her own name and her own lands. If she must suffer alone, for her sole fault, should he suffer alone who had done none?

If he doubted, let that be her punishment. Alas, not the only one. She was herself, and knew herself and him: for ever another punishment would stand. Let all this loathsome cloud of misery pass by, still there would remain the truth that she had not told him what she should have told: and more — that he had partly failed her.

He had been her idol: her perfect one. Of herself as perfect she had never thought. Her own faults were familiar, homely, to be outgrown, but not forgotten: he had been faultless. When all this trouble should be past, he could not still be quite the same. Loved as before, as now (for anger and love are common play-fellows enough) he could never again be quite the Philip he had been. Honest, and good, sincere in everything, in religion and conduct, in duty; honourable, loyal, faithful, pure, faultless — he had lacked just the perfection of one fault. He had failed her in that; his faultlessness had set one fault between them.

If he could have lacked that one fault, her own faultiness might easily have been borne by her. With much still to learn, she had learned that much. We confess our sins and God forgives, so we, not pretending a nicety finer than God's, come to forgive ourselves also. But the faults of others we do not assume the right to pardon — that is God's business, not ours; and so we are teased by them.

Hereafter all might yet be well between Phil and her; a sort of certainty asserted itself in her that this would be. She *knew* she was his wife, by God's and man's law, and he must presently come to know it too. Nevertheless, when all his doubts should have been dispelled, and he, who so deeply loved her, should feel again free to let himself think of her as his alone, and should have taken his own to himself, still, still her punishment would continue in that she could not, merely because of wishing it, forget the division that had been, or its cause, which lay in his doubt of her. In that doubt of her was his one revealed imperfection, and her punishment must be the inevitable memory that he had not been altogether perfect.

After all it showed her generous and large nature,

a nature marred but not spoiled by early training, or rather the early want of all training, that she should be infinitely more wounded by the revelation of a fault or failure in him whom she loved, than by the knowledge that her own deeper fault was no longer hidden from him — that her own perfection lay damaged in his eyes. Perhaps, too, all this proved how little progress she had made in what is called supernatural virtue. By nature she was not religious; some men and women are born with a tendency to the supernatural, to intimacy with God. Such people are not always "good"; they may commit sin on sin, until sin becomes a habit, but an acquired habit, and it may need a huge, almost miraculous, interposition of grace to save them. But often the supernatural habit is stronger with such people than the sins into which they slip, and through all their faults one perceives plainly a religious cast of heart and mind.

Gill was not like that. Her nature was not mystical, and religion had to be learned, like a difficult science. She had first arrived at the real conception of God, as the necessary objective of worship, by an odd process; perceiving the existence of worship, and recognising its vast reality, she had been convinced that there must be an adequate and true claimant for it: so she had found God, as it were, by default. And yet, plainly as she had seen poor Mark's mistake, had she not fallen into it herself?

Philip must be perfect. It was not enough that he should be worthy of her whole love; she, with a nature far less vehement and passionate than Mark's, had, in fact, been giving her own worship to her husband. The worship was different, because it was not purely instinctive, like Mark's. To him it mattered nothing at all whether the object of his worship were worthy or unworthy. To her it must matter; she had to be-

lieve her husband perfect, while she gave him a worship due only to perfection. But she had given it.

Her service of God meant chiefly the fulfilment of duty — a noble service, but by itself not the noblest. We know who said: "If ye love Me keep My commandments." But the mere exact performance of duties does not keep the first and greatest of them. There were many in Judæa who "kept the commandments," but failed to learn that first: the Magdalene learned it, maybe, before she had finished learning to keep the others!

Gill might have said of herself:

> "I saw God sitting above me.
> And I — I sat among men:
> And I have loved these."

CHAPTER XLIX

When Gill had conquered her temptation to begone and let her husband call her back himself; when the love of wife and mother had asserted itself above the urgent whisper of bitterly hurt pride, she felt no triumph. Real temptations half conquered bring no triumphant feeling; she was only tired. But with the weariness there came a certain sense of rest. Nothing wears like pride, and pride had been the sting of all these long hours of sorrow and disturbance. Of very calm habitual manner, she was turbulent at heart when anything deep enough to pierce her heart wounded her. She sank down once again before the now dead fire, almost as one whose limbs fail her, so weakly they seemed to bear her up.

At last Mark could bear the sight of her lonely pain no longer; he had not the least thought of being himself able to share her sorrow and ease it; he could only turn away into the darkness, determining not to help her by word or intruded presence, but by act. All this time the cold rain had been drenching him, and he was wet quite to the skin; he saw how cold she too was by her empty hearth, and he exulted in his own chill and physical wretchedness. He gave no further heed to either.

Gill sat on, and beyond the figure of her husband rose another, at first faintly noted. Of Philip she was sure that in his sorrow and foreboding he had lifted his sad heart to God. She had been conscious of it almost with resentment, because she divined that God Himself was put between them. In one way she knew that Philip's

share of their trouble was harder to bear than hers; for in his doubt he did not dare to love her as his wife. Love her he did, and must; but he could not yield to his love and take her to his heart as she would have taken him — until he knew, until all uncertainty should be over. If innocently he had taken another man's wife, he could not innocently go on holding to his husband's love for her when doubt arose — until the doubt should be cleared away.

This was precisely her grievance against him: that he had admitted doubt, a doubt which must involve herself. Still there it was. And being there it made it worse for him. In her anger and scorched pride she had accused him in this of being less manly than herself.

All the same she recognised that it was God Himself who stood between them. And now, slowly, she herself began to see Him. She did not want to. It was Philip, her husband, she wished to think of — Philip and herself. Yet she could not help herself. That other Third arose, and insisted. They were not alone; He would not suffer it; had never meant it. They, Philip and she, were to be, in this world's speech, "all in all" to each other: yes, but there is another speech older than any invented by the little race of men for telling one another what it means, a speech eternal, a language that preceded all tongues; and in it no human is to be all in all to any human. A high, cold doctrine — as all heights look cold, the colder the nearer to the sun. Gill shrank from it, but saw it.

To whom had she really given her worship? To the Divine Perfection that taught it? Nay, but to a human perfection she had imagined and fashioned for herself. God had never meant it: He had meant something else, which she had ignored. He had meant Himself.

Man was made in God's image that we, who cannot see the God, may divine Him beyond the man — by condescension of the absolutely spiritual to the half spiritual, half material, that can rise beyond the material only by steps. And by a more stupendous condescension God, knowing man's proneness to adore man, to rest in the image, instead of hastening upward to the Divine Original, became Man Himself, that we might adore man and be blameless. All this God would do; all this and much more God has done: but He cannot change, and His law, which is Himself, cannot be changed. He must be the object, the final goal of all real love, of all worship; any diversion must be perversion, a crookedness, a deformity, a loss.

That is why God is so intolerable to those who will not know Him. His claim is so absolute that the wayward democracy of man abhors it. God will be the elected Chief of no republic, but eternal Monarch, without predecessor or heir; and in the Βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ are no citizens but only subjects. And this claim is not to mere obedience; but, more inward, to love. A cold correctness of conduct is not enough. He must be master of the heart as well as of the act.

No other sovereign has dared such a claim, no tyrant has dreamt of it: obedience is the limit of the demand put out by any earthly monarch. When Christ said "My kingdom is not of this world," and "Whoso loveth father or mother above Me is not worthy of Me," He was declaring Himself to be God.

Nothing could justify such a claim on man except being God. He justifies it by being Himself, and, further — by condescension, not of necessity — by the story of His dealings with us. God Himself has no history, being eternal; but man's history is the complete record of his relations with God, in which the patience

of His love is the connecting thread on which it is strung.

All this, and a great deal more than this, rose and fell in Gill's mind and memory, like a sea that beat against the rock of her heart. The record of God's general dealing with men was not now new to her; for as many years as the wounds of Christ she had been hearing it in sermons, reading it in books. The final triple proof of His love, Birth and Life and Death, perpetuated and culminated in the Blessed Sacrament, which is like all three; a closer veiling than the first white swathing bands of Bethlehem, a life more hidden and humble than that of the carpenter's shop at Nazareth, a stillness more sepulchral than the sealing in of Joseph of Arimathea's new tomb. All this was now part of her knowledge and belief.

But in a new fashion, and a new degree, she to-night became aware of His relation towards herself. She knew that her love had stopped less than half-way to Him; while His for her had not hung aloof in heaven. By nature generous, she was for the first time fully shamed of her meanness; for she had been content to give scarcely anything, even of the little she might have given, while accepting everything. The sacrament of her marriage had not risen to its end and object; her love for her husband and children had not been cords of invisible gold lifting her to heaven, but chains of flesh and blood binding her to her home on earth.

Was she not, after all, more heathenish than the Pantheist who sees the presence of God in everything so irresistibly that in a crude impulse of reverence he cries out that all is God?

Was it not the cold, plain truth that she had not much needed God, because His gifts had been so splendid?

The sense of meanness, of greediness, of ungenerosity was not easy to her; she could not recognise her fault and sit still good friends with it. Even now, as she sat alone, in the cold night, she moved restlessly, and was aware of another coldness and darkness in herself and ashamed of both. Even of her husband she did not find herself worthy, and now beside his likeness stood another, of whose more patient tenderness she was more unworthy still. She could not be quite content with unworthiness; deadened as she had been, she was not dead, and the law of life is progress.

And it seemed to her suddenly that God's tenderness was more perfect even than that she had complained of missing in her husband. She felt that He was dealing with her, and His hand was strong, inexorable, but not rough or cold. He was insisting, and His insistence was sharp, but because that on which He insisted was that she should be what He meant. Little as the human heart can be, shallow as it can make itself, nothing can fill it but Himself; it must be empty if filled with anything else.

He might have left her to herself — left her, as he would say, unpunished; that is, punished finally by never being anything better. That He had not been content to do; He reached down an omnipotent finger into her prosperous life, and troubled the pool, sending His angel down into it; and now that she first thought of clambering down into the chill water, He Himself stood smiling gently beside her, and bade her arise instead and walk.

Perhaps that was why that other impotent person had been left so long. For thirty and eight years he had been sitting still, waiting for a man to help; and God had come instead. During all those idle years he had not merely been unforgotten, but something bet-

ter than he had counted on had been drawing near out of eternity, in which there are no years. Not always does God let men be His almoners, or even an angel bring His message; sometimes He comes Himself.

She felt His presence, and knew that it was not upbraiding; such reproach as was in it was only the exquisite reproach of love unrequited but still given. Not mystical by nature, she did not see the August Figure as an external vision, but in a procession of memories; and yet the reality was no less.

Another picture rose between her wounded self and the personal loneliness in which her thoughts here had begun — the temple-court, and the seated teacher, the listening folk on whose puzzled ears dropped the new doctrine of inward worship, love; and then the rough and cruel irruption of those who dragged to Him one who had foully broken the plainest orderings of the law.

"This woman," they pitilessly urged upon Him, "hath been taken in adultery, in the very act. And Moses in the law commanded us that such an one should be stoned. But how sayest Thou?"

She saw Him, in her picture, stoop forward, still seated, and write all that He ever did write on earth — His sentence, which none of them could read. But they pressed for condemnation, as such do, being men, and of man's bitter, merciless spirit.

So He lifted Himself and gave them licence, all the leave to judge He ever does give.

"Let him cast the first stone at her who among you is without sin." And He stooped again to His writing — on the world itself, that while the world lasts it might not be effaced.

But when they were all gone, He was left, He alone and she. Now was His turn. They had but been her

fellow-criminals — accomplices in outrage, for what matters the sin, so it be sin? The pride-sin, or the flesh-sin, or the sin of unlove, all is against Him.

But He had made her; and for Himself. With as generous a hand had He given *her* His imperial gift of life as to any of the saints, and for the same end. What had she done with it? For her, too, must He die; His life for hers, as though hers had not been sent adrift from Him.

He could condemn, though those others could not. They had no right of judgment, but He had all. His writings ceased. And again He lifted Himself and looked upon her ruined image of Himself.

Her cowering form was that of woman, like His mother, from which He had drawn His own shape of man. Must not that memory cry against her?

"Woman, where are they, thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?"

"No man, Lord."

Ay, but they were men, and He was more. Against them, indeed, she had sinned, for every sin is a wound on the whole body of man, another tear in man's soul, already so tattered. He was God, and against Him she had sinned, though all mankind were sinless and unwounded.

Could she believe the voice she heard? — His?

"Neither do I condemn thee. Go, and sin no more."

Not because her sin mattered less to Him than to them. Not out of a wilful exercise of supreme prerogative, not in spite of being God, but because He was God — and knew all things.

Gill saw Him; for the first time truly. And seeing Him she began at last to see nought else. Like Peter and James and John she had seen Moses and Elias

when the vision began; now like them she heard Him speaking:

"Rise up, and fear not."

And saw no man, save Jesus only.

CHAPTER L

It was with a heavy heart that Philip Andros travelled home upon the morrow; a heart as heavy as hers had been, and as full of sorrow, but less troubled too, for in his trouble there was neither bitterness nor anger.

He had not her immovable conviction that the blackness of this cloud would pass; his misgiving was that it would darken both their lives, and the lives of their luckless, innocent children permanently. He tried to feel certain that all was as she clearly believed in the matter of her first marriage. But he could not. He did his best to give full weight to the fact that the Duca di Torre Greca had made all inquiries, and had been satisfied. He did not in the least suppose that such a man would be careless, or would allow himself to be lured by his wishes and inclinations into a doubtful marriage: he did not forget the duke's position, or do injustice to his character, or assume that he had been less scrupulous in so vital a matter than Philip would have been himself. But the duke had finally supposed Zante to be dead, and that probably made him then think that the question of the legality of Gillian's former marriage was no longer of practical importance. And now it was proved that Zante was alive.

The first marriage, it seemed to Philip, might even be proved illegal, and yet be a valid marriage in the eye of the Church. If that were so, how could this trouble pass away?

It would be ridiculous to pretend that such a man as Andros could think little of what it all would mean, for himself, his children, and their mother. It would have

meant everything, even had he been utterly obscure, and nameless. It must appear more terrible, being what he was. No breath of scandal or shame had ever tarnished the honour and dignity of his house and name.

The mere thought of the possibility was intolerable, and yet the possibility was there, and must be faced and might have to be borne.

Of Gill herself he thought incessantly — of what it would be for her. He knew her to be proud, and he knew her boundless love for himself and for their children. What if she must lose him? What if even the children, though they would still be hers — ay, and his, too — should be proved nameless, illegitimate? And that which he remembered for himself he did not forget for her; that her high rank and standing in the world must make it worse. If such a fall were doomed, how could it be unknown? Must it not become public and notorious?

She, as we have seen, had felt that against him she had a grievance, in that she perceived he doubted. Had he not his grievance against her, in the very fact that she would admit no doubt at all?

He would not say this even to himself: he was far too manly a man to ease himself by accusation of a woman, and that woman the one he had loved as his wife, and loved still with all the deep quietness of his silent, reserved nature — though it might prove that the right to go on loving her as his own, as his wife, could be no longer his. But though he would not say this, the thought would urge itself. In her absolute refusal to admit the faintest possibility of doubt, was there not almost a levity, profound as he knew her grief and trouble to be? Almost ostentatiously she had shown that her pity was simply for him — because he doubted, and therefore foreboded what she utterly refused to forebode.

It was by no means lost on him that she thought herself more manly than him in her fearlessness.

And then she had not told him what she had freely told to the old duke. Philip knew well that he was himself her first love: that, much as she had valued and reverenced Torre Greca, she had cared for him in a wholly different fashion, as a girl may care for a benefactor, a true friend and protector, almost a father. And yet she had given the confidence to Torre Greca that she had held back from him.

If only she had told him! What misery for them both, for their children, would have been spared!

Yes, he was miserable, heavy-hearted, weighed down with foreboding. But, nevertheless, less troubled than Gill.

With her religion was a new thing, faith a habit yet half-fledged. With him it was a lifelong habit.

Now was the time for it to help him, and it did. God and He were no strangers, but familiar friends, and the sense of friendlessness could not crush him as it had been crushing her.

He did not pretend to understand infinite purpose; he was not given to mapping out the hidden ways of invisible providence, to label them and show their courses and their destinations. He was not glib, as some are, at translating Divine meanings to set on them the impertinence of his approval. But he believed. Faith in God was not a mere reasoned formula, accepted because incontrovertible, but a conviction, personal and real. "Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him." Of God's love he never doubted, of God's tenderness; though all else should fail, that would not. And he was truer in faith and trust than many who can trust for themselves. He could trust for Gill also. Even in his misery he would not fall into the veiled impertinence of praying "Strike me but spare her," for he

knew in Whom he trusted; and that she was more to God than to himself. If he cared for her, God cared more. All his own solicitude for her was but indifference compared with His. He knew that Christ did not bid us hold our souls free from over-care because even the meat and the drink and the raiment were matters of no consequence at all, but because our Father careth for these things for us. Many are they who will trust God for themselves but cannot trust to Him those they love better than themselves. That also Philip could do.

And so it was that in all his heavy weight of outward trouble and foreboding he kept an inward peace. If the sorrow he feared fell, then even that must be for good. He did not weary himself to understand how. Perfect knowledge is not for this porch, but for the palace beyond it. Peace comes not by understanding but by belief.

To the modern world Philip needs apology. His inward peace will be held hypocrisy or heartlessness; because, professing to believe, it holds itself to know its own business best; it decides what is good and what is bad, without reference to the Supreme Arbiter. If this evil falls He is cruel; if that good is withheld He is jealous and niggardly, less tender than ourselves, less generous than man. Or else it disbelieves and says so; and sees all things, that is nothing. There is nothing out of sight; no veil; the naked circumstance has no inward meaning for us to divine, misfortune is Fate's brutality, and there an end of it; or there is neither good and bad, but a cold procession of cause and consequence, without intention or profit. Abjuring mystery, it loves the blankly inexplicable; just as, despising faith, it flirts with each new superstition.

To them I will make no apology for Philip. To the novelist there may be need of a hero, to the chronicler

there is only need of sincerity. Philip was no more a hero than Gill was a heroine. He was not so clever as she thought him; but it was not his fault that she had chosen to imagine him perfect. He was an upright, honest man, tender and loving, but loving God more than anything on earth; not with loud words of protest, but with ineradicable confidence and intimacy. He made no cry of "Lord, Lord," making Mammon his true effective master; at best temporal good can only be truly good because it is a part and instalment of eternal good, and in time that which is eternal can only be divined obscurely. This he could remember in all his trouble, and so, fearing more than Gill, he feared it less, because the bitterest pain of this life could only have a comparative weight. He, too, could reckon that neither life itself nor death itself, nor all that was present to threaten, nor all that might be to come, should the threat fulfil itself, was worthy to be compared with the glory which should be revealed.

He was far indeed from being heartless. As he drew near home, and drove up through the park, most of all when their house came in sight, he was thinking of her, and of himself as bound up in her.

This was their home; how if it could be no longer his and hers as it had been? If what he dreaded came to pass they could not be there any more together; and he knew very well that she would not live there in his absence as his guest, its mistress by his generosity and sufferance. Nor could his son succeed him here; how could he help thinking of that? It was all entailed, and a distant cousin, whom he could neither like or respect, would be master after him. Of poverty for their children there would indeed be no fear; though Gill's estates were also entailed, and could not be theirs. Both he and she would have to save and make provision for them.

CHAPTER LI

Philip almost dreaded to meet Gillian. Yesterday she had seemed to harden herself more and more. But now she met him with a different air, gentler, less proud, and somehow more tender. She was paler even than usual, and her eyes looked very dark: it was impossible not to perceive how terribly she had been suffering ever since they parted. He knew she had not slept, and, strong as she always was, he saw that she was utterly fatigued, and was now borne down by physical weakness. The idea of Gillian ill was so new and strange that it was much more disturbing to see her thus than if she had been delicate and commonly ailing.

And yet she was almost cheerful, at all events so serene as to seem so.

She called him immediately by his name, which last night she had not done once.

"Phil," she said, "the children have gone over to Mavis for the whole day. They wanted to stop at home as you were coming back; but I had promised Lady Merle to send them to-day, and made them go. The small Talbot children are there, and she wanted some one to play with them. Was the meeting a success?"

"Yes . . . but Gill, you look so ill."

He could hardly speak; she feared he would break down; he stood opposite her, close to her, with such tender grief and pity in his eyes. Yesterday she would not suffer the least show of pity; to-day she accepted it, smiling with a clear friendship.

"But I'm not a bit ill; only I feel as if I had no legs. You aren't much to look at yourself."

She smiled again, and he gave back her smile, saying quietly:

"Is it peace?"

"At least that, Phil. That at all events."

She saw that he thanked God, and her heart smote her. She could not but know that yesterday she had made his pain more bitter by her own pride and resentment.

In words he said nothing to thank her, but his whole mien and attitude and expression was a thanksgiving.

Her courage he had admired from the first, but her courage did not show less bravely now that it was tempered by gentleness. He felt prouder of it and of her now.

She said to-day what yesterday she had not said, but fiercely made apparent.

"We are husband and wife," she told him, moving a pace away, but not turning her eyes from his. "It is not I that tell you, but God who tells me. . . . Meanwhile let us help each other."

For a moment she was silent, and he did not interrupt her, for he saw she had something further to say.

"You left me that man's address," she went on quietly, "and I have telegraphed to him to come here to-day. I said any time after twelve; he may be here quite soon."

Phil saw how loathsome the idea of meeting the man was to her, but saw also that she was quite resolved on its necessity, and entirely without fear of it. It was repulsion, not dread, that she felt.

"I told you I would see him alone if you wished," he said, "or perhaps you would rather see him alone."

"That last I will not. Perhaps it would be best for you to see him alone first. Make him understand that

I have not denied his story, but that you learn he didn't tell it to you fully. Let him, if you choose, tell his own version again. Then we will see him together; but be sure of this, he comes for money only, and has not the least idea of pretending that I am his wife."

Not long after twelve o'clock Zante came, and Philip did at first see him alone.

More quickened in apprehension by what Gill had said, Andros now did gather somehow the impression that the man was poor and in bad circumstances. He also arrived at the conclusion that the story was told less confidently; nothing was added it, nothing withdrawn; it was almost verbally identical with what he had said yesterday. But the telling of it seemed less easy, though now he must be more prepared, since yesterday he had not expected to be at once confronted with Mr. Andros.

Philip made no comment on what he was told, but almost immediately said:

"Now, will you come with me to Lady Glentilt?"

For the first time since their marriage Andros felt it a relief that Gill was called by a name that bore no reference to her being his wife.

Zante got up and prepared to follow his host, betraying, as was natural enough, no eagerness to see again the woman he had treated so wickedly.

Andros held towards him a frigid courtesy, but was at no pains to hide his scorn, and Zante could not, scoundrel as he was, be altogether impervious to it.

Gill sat waiting in the saloon, where she had watched alone last night, and presently a door opened, and she looked up. She saw Zante in the long mirror opposite the door which had reflected her own first entrance into that room, years ago now.

Philip, like most men, scarcely noticed another man's looks, and Zante's extraordinary beauty had been lost

upon him. But the beauty was still there. Many years had passed since Gill first saw the Greek, but he did not look older. He was, indeed, much thinner, but the perfect figure was the same, and the likeness to the Antinöus at Naples was as wonderful as ever. The close-curling ruddy-brown hair had not thinned or taken one taint of grey; he was exactly like a portrait of Eustachio taken just before his first meeting with herself at Taormina.

She stood still to await his coming on the hearth he had come to ruin, and presently he stood near her, and bowed low before her.

She did not speak, or answer his greeting in any way, but neither did she look away. His eyes met hers, but fell before them, as well they might. A very faint blush crept up into his cheek — the first she had ever seen there.

Gill neither sat down herself nor bade him seat himself. She seemed to need no support, and leant against nothing, neither did she fidget, or play with anything. In her hand she held a book, but it never moved. There was nothing haughty in her look, still less defiant; her head was not thrown back, but held level; and, with unabashed eyes, she perpetually sought those of the man opposite her, which he found hard to keep fixed.

Once or twice he could not help casting a swift glance up and down the huge princely room, but nothing in its dignity and splendour abashed him like its mistress.

"My husband," she said at last, "told me of your coming yesterday. You came to see me. So, as you failed yesterday, I sent for you to-day. And you are come again. For what?"

He made a gesture meant to express deprecation.

"I came," he said, "to let you know that I was alive

— to explain that my brother's death at San Francisco had evidently misled you."

The voice was not so entirely unaltered as the face. It was the same voice almost, but changed perhaps by degrading circumstances; as beautiful as of old, as musical, but tainted with the faintest natural twang of American intonation. What she noted more than the transatlantic inflexion was its coarser tone.

"My husband," she said, "understands Italian perfectly. Let us talk it."

Zante seemed surprised, as was not unnatural, for in general they had been used to talk in English; but of this he did not remind her.

"For years I have been in America," he said, "and have spoken only English . . . but I will talk in Italian if you prefer."

And he did so, fluently, easily; nevertheless it was evidently true that he was less familiar with Italian now than used to be the case.

"Will you tell my husband where we met?" she asked him coldly.

"At Taormina."

"Of course. But where there?"

"On the rocks by Sant Andrea. You were about to read, but I interrupted you."

"I meant first."

"In the hotel."

"The Timeo? In what part of it?"

"At dinner, of course. Your father was with you. . . ."

"Certainly. But though the Timeo is a better hotel than the Naumachia, my father took me to the latter because the Timeo happened to be closed."

"That also I remember. It was you who suggested the Timeo."

"Would it be possible to remember what you said,

what I said? Our conversation was not important, but it was our first. Can you flatter my vanity by recalling my first talk with you?"

She saw he could not.

"Never mind. It evidently did not impress you. Let us leave such small matters for the moment. Will you please state to me again, in my husband's presence, what you have already told him."

"The circumstances?"

"Yes. The history of your acquaintance with me."

He repeated it all, word for word, as he had told it to Andros. That Philip noticed, but it did not explicitly occur to him as odd that Zante should be so scrupulous in avoiding the faintest variation of his tale, that no slightest detail was now added or omitted. What he noticed more was Gill's manner.

At first it was scornful and almost terribly hard, merciless; as if she had but one idea — to make the man's baseness show itself more and more nakedly.

Much as Philip hated the recollection, he could not forget that she had accepted this man in marriage, and had believed herself his wife. No such memory was allowed to temper in the least her rigid, pitiless air of despising him too much to fear him. She held herself as one who granted an audience because she chose, not as one who was yielding to what she could not help.

Nor did the scorn die out of her demeanour yet; when it did, the change came with a suddenness that startled both men. But the hardness, which was at first cruel, seemed to decrease without her losing in the least her appearance of mastering instead of being mastered.

She listened attentively, only interrupting now and then to question his memory as to a point of detail.

"Do you remember what dress the French consul's

wife wore the first time she dined at our table, after you had pretended to marry me?" she asked carelessly.

"I do not notice ladies' dress much. Certainly, I do not remember."

"You probably do not even remember that we laughed about it afterwards?"

"Perhaps it was you who laughed. Ladies are more critical of each other's costumes than we are."

"Signor Eustachio Zante used to be extremely critical in such matters," she said coolly. "Please go on."

He went on, but evidently annoyed at the triviality of the interruption.

"Do you remember," she inquired presently, "that when the Poppos who married us went back to Greece, his nephew took his place?"

"He is there still."

"You have forgotten that for two weeks another Poppos filled the vacancy whom I did not like."

"I do not think you liked any Poppos very much."

"Please go on."

Again he obeyed, once more unable to conceal his dislike of such trivial interruption.

"Do you remember," she asked presently, "why it was we took to dining in the garden?"

"Partly for coolness, partly because the dining-room was being cleaned."

"Not exactly cleaned. But, of course, after it was enlarged it had to be cleaned. Please go on."

He went on, and she interrupted him no more for quite a long time.

"Do you recall," she asked at length, "a conversation in which I was first told that my husband — as I thought him — had a younger brother?"

"Yes: I do not recollect precisely the occasion."

"I do. It was in the garden. You had been showing some interest in my family; and I had been telling you the little I then knew. Not to be outdone in civility, I endeavored to show my interest in yours."

"And I told you of my younger brother, Empedocle, and that he had given me trouble."

"Yes; I hope he has improved. He is older now, and may have learned prudence, if not conduct. He must be to-day of much the same age as M. Eustachio Zante was then. But it is hard to tell your story with so many interruptions."

She became silent, but never once withdrew her watching eyes. Not once had she even glanced at her husband.

Zante continued his tale, which was nearly at an end. It was not, one would say, very easy to tell. He told of his leaving her, of his writing to explain that the marriage was illegal, of his second marriage, of his departure for America, of his brother's death at San Francisco.

"That was my eldest brother, Electryon."

"I hope he was not also troublesome."

"No: he did very well, and also married an American lady, the cousin of my own wife. . . ."

Suddenly Gill turned to the fireplace and rang the bell.

"When they come," she said to her husband, "tell them to bring some wine, and some food — anything. Can you not see that M. Zante is going to faint?"

Almost all along Philip had been so fully occupied by watching his wife that he had scarcely had eyes to spare for Zante. He was startled by her abrupt action, and by the extraordinary change in her manner.

"Listen," she said decisively to Zante, "and sit down while you listen, for you can hardly stand. You know

perfectly well that you are not my husband, and that you never were."

"Our marriage was irregular—" he began, but she interrupted him, with a roughness that was less angry than impatient.

CHAPTER LII

"We were never married," she said. "You were never my husband or pretended to be. That was your brother's crime, not yours: you had better let dead men carry the weight of their own villainies."

The bell was answered, and Andros bade the servant bring wine and refreshments at once. When the man had gone for them Gill continued:

"Your plot needed a cleverer man than you, and a more courageous. You have been afraid of me from the moment you saw me. I have been trying for half-an-hour not to pity you: but you are too pitiable not to be pitied. You had heard my story, and being desperate, poverty-stricken, you thought to turn it into money. You fancied I would give you a good deal to keep your story to yourself: not because you dared to claim me as your wife — your brother, if he could rise from his grave, would not dare that. Here is the wine: take it and see if it will help you out."

The door indeed opened again, and when the servants were gone, she herself poured out the wine, and gave it to the wretched man to drink.

"You knew the *facts* quite well, but nothing else. Your brother never told you of his talk: how could you 'remember' it? You, of course, did not know that the French consul's wife never entered our house after my marriage to your brother. When I said just now, that enlarging a dining-room was not exactly cleaning it, you did not dare to correct me. The dining-room was never enlarged. We dined in the garden simply because it was my fancy. . . . Now drop all this

nonsense: your brother's death is easy to prove: it may take a few days, it may take a few weeks. But my husband, the Duke of Torre Greca, was, in fact, certified of it before he married me. Out of fear, I would never have given you or your brother either, if he needed money, one farthing. But I would give you or any one money not to die of starvation."

"I will tell the truth," said Zante.

"If you can. Some people lose the faculty."

"My brother Eustachio is dead," he almost stammered. "I am Empedocle.

"At first," Zante went on, "I thought simply of begging from you, thinking you might pity the utter poverty of a man whose brother —"

"I thought you were to tell the truth," Gill interrupted.

Zante fell silent altogether.

"It is of no use," she went on, "you cannot tell the truth. It is useless to try and patch up any decent story or excuse. There is no excuse. You came to get money out of my misery, thinking to find me a coward like yourself. One thing is true — you are penniless, and desperate. As long as I had money I would give it to any man who was starving; it would make no difference to me, so far, if I thought him deserving or worthless. Your worthlessness will not feed you. Let it be my revenge to save you from starvation."

She went to a writing-table, and brought money from it, which she laid beside Zante on the table near him.

And then, with a touch of odd compassion, she turned to a window and signed to Philip to come to her, so that the man might take her money unseen by either of them.

It was a good deal; to a penniless man, momentary wealth; but without the chink of a coin, without the rustle of a note, he pocketed it in a moment.

Philip, hard as he had been tempted to think her in

her mere bearing, was less compassionate or more prudent when it came to practice.

She could see that he doubted her wisdom in giving Zante anything. She merely smiled, and her smile told him that her act was not one of pity only, but of the same fearlessness she had shown throughout. Nothing on earth could make her fear the pitiful scoundrel.

The window stood open, and without another word she stepped out of it on to the terrace. Philip and Zante were left alone.

The latter was now standing up; relieved of Gill's presence, he tried to call back some of his self-possession with a rather poor success.

"Lady Glentilt," he said, "is too angry to hear me out. I came — to beg; to appeal to her wealth and compassion; to see her alone, and let her know of my misery. She is right; I was quite penniless. Without intending it, I had to see you first, and you startled my story out of me. I alluded to her first marriage. I saw you knew nothing of it. While I was speaking it occurred to me that if you supposed the man to be still alive whom she had believed to be her husband, you would gladly purchase his absence — your manner did not lead me to hope anything from your mere charity. But you offered me nothing, and seemed to take it for granted that I must see Lady Glentilt. I did not think she would see me — especially if she believed me to be Eustachio; the fact of our having the same initial occurred to me —"

"You need not go on," Andros interrupted coldly, "for I tell you plainly that I do not believe a word you are saying. You wish me to think that all this was not a preconcerted plot, but a sudden temptation. Whether you yielded to such a temptation yesterday, or six months ago, does not matter to me in the least, nor to

my opinion of you. No one suddenly becomes altogether base."

Zante seemed to have half a mind to defend himself and protest: oddly enough, he was far less cowed by Philip Andros than he had been by his wife. After all, the money was in his pocket, and the presence of those notes inspirited him. He was capable of becoming impertinent now, though to Gill he could not have been so.

But Andros was quite determined neither to listen to him, nor to suffer his continued presence.

He rang the bell again, and said decisively:

"When the servant comes you will please let him show you to the door. Remember you are lucky to be allowed to go. Your coming here to try and extract money under false pretences happens to be a crime against the law, as well as a base plot. I am a magistrate, and might, perhaps ought, order your arrest."

"Why not do what you ought?" asked Zante with smooth insolence.

"Because my wife has suffered enough —"

"And because you are not so much of a man as she is. *She* would have me arrested in a moment if she was not too magnanimous. . . . If you had had her courage yesterday, I should never have come back today. But after meeting you I was, I confess, misled as to what your wife would be like."

The bell was answered, and Zante had the last word. He at once turned away, and the footman understood that the visitor was going, and escorted him to the door.

"Thank you," said the Greek, giving the man half-a-crown, the last coin he had except for the notes and gold Gill had given him. He was innately vain, and hated to be thought poor by a servant, and his clothes were so

shabby that a servant would be sure to notice it. He had no idea what might be the real customs of great houses like this, but knew that there was much "tipping."

"That's a queer sort of fellow," said the footman to himself, as Empedocle took his graceful figure down the broad stone steps; "he tips you for opening the door, and he's as seedy as a melon. And they didn't ask him to lunch."

Empedocle walked away, less and less depressed in his habitual swaggering shamelessness the further he got from the house. In appearance he was almost precisely what Eustachio had been at his age; his moral calibre was the same too: but he had had a poorer training, and had mixed with inferior companions. Probably no English *man* would ever have mistaken Eustachio for a gentleman, but an English woman might have done so; and no English woman who knew what gentlemen are like would have thought Empedocle like one.

The younger brother was more talkative, much less restrained than the elder: more bumptious, and a great deal more cowardly, though both were cowards. In physical danger, indeed, Empedocle would have been the bolder of the two; in moral trials Eustachio would have had more hardihood, for he would have been more cautious, and have had more foresight. Neither were in the least clever, but Empedocle's wits were livelier than his brother's in a shallow sort of adroitness; Eustachio had been less imprudent.

The great house had from the first had a considerable effect on Empedocle. It was the knowledge of Gill's wealth that had brought him, but the sight of it had in the event rather abashed him. Money was his one idea; and people with as much money as there was evidence of at Andros mostly did what they liked, he considered.

People who can afford to give away large sums are, he had argued with a sinking spirit, exactly those who are not to be wheedled out of them. When Philip saw him at the door yesterday, and brought him in across the huge, magnificent hall into the library, nearly as huge, and equally grand in its different way, he had begun to despair. After all, nothing he could say or reveal would make the squire less master of Andros Court. What, thought Empedocle, was a wife more or less to such a man? And of course he knew that his tale would not finally hold water, or bear the cold light of investigation. But Philip had misled him. The tale told by the Greek had so evidently taken him unawares, that Empedocle at once began to feel a greater sense of power: he perceived all Philip's misgiving, and also that Andros was deeply devoted to his wife, and would weigh lightly anything done to save her name from public reproach or scandal. He had longed to propose an immediate bargain, but had been afforded no opening. If only he could have secured a good round sum, and got away! But Andros had at once assumed the necessity of confronting the stranger with his wife.

Another thing had been perceived by Empedocle — that Mr. Andros had not simply refused to credit his tale; this had given him a false confidence. He could not realise that such men as Philip do not lightly accuse others of calculated falsehood.

Then it was, as he himself said, he expected to find in the wife less courage than in the husband. She was a woman and had more to lose, and must be more perturbed. He was, too, quite sharp enough to see that her not having told her secret reduced the strength of her position: if she had hidden it from her husband, what would she not give to hide it still from the world?

"That pompous coward deceived me," he told himself now, with righteous indignation. "How could I

know that such a nervous stick would have such an Amazon for a wife?"

He was much less angry with her than with Andros. Relentless as her reception had been, she had in fact relented, and had given him food and drink — and money.

She, too, by her telegram had deceived him; for he had learned of Philip's departure on the previous night, and when her message came he supposed that she wished to see him, and perhaps conclude the whole business, alone, before her husband's return. He was very willing that it should be so, and he had a natural sympathy for the least honest course. Her interests and his coincided so far, and he was fully ready to help her in helping himself. He wished that he could have seen her first, that he need not have seen Andros at all, and almost blamed himself for having told his story to the husband. But how could he, once received by the husband, get to see the wife without the husband's suspicion?

Now that he had seen Gill he admired her; he had a very open eye for female beauty, and hers was of so rare a sort that it almost astonished him. She had treated him badly, but she had paid for it. He knew that he could not possibly have expected any reception but a bad one; and the great thing was the money. That he had, and it was a great deal.

As the distance between him and the house increased, the abashing *effect* of it and of its mistress faded from his consciousness, but the *memory* of all the signs of wealth he had seen remained. No wonder Lady Glentilt had fought fiercely for her position!

He took the money out and handled it with affection; it would last a good while. And suddenly it occurred to him that not only was there plenty more where this had come from, but that more might come.

She had pretended to give it out of mere compassion. But was he to suppose that every penniless wretch who appealed to her pity would be sent away with a roll of notes and a handful of gold!

He was out of sight of the big house now. The short cut from the lodge across the park, pointed out to him yesterday by the lodge-keeper's wife, led through a large spinney with a thick undergrowth of hazel and thorn-brake. No one could see him, and he counted his spoils over lovingly; he was ready to kiss the clean, crisp notes.

"A first instalment!" he said aloud to himself. "The first crushings of my mill."

He had not the least intention of coming here again; there would be no need. He could always write. There would be no necessity for written explanations; he would never threaten, but merely appeal to her generous compassion. She would understand.

"A good beginning," he said, carefully putting back the money.

Not a very good beginning for the longer reach of life that lies for all of us, infamous or penitent, beyond that sharp corner we call Death.

The sun shone bright above the trees, and filtered down in a clear green shade that was only a cooler, more delicate light. The rooks were busy in their noisy town above him. From far away came the barking of a house-dog in some farmstead. The smell of hay, lying ready for the carting, crept on the still air. The peace he had come to trouble seemed everywhere, as though it had returned like the summer briefly interrupted by the night of rain.

This fellow loved the sun and the hot light. He moved forward rapidly, willing to pass out of even such warm shade as this; in front, beyond the trees, lay the

unshadowed sward, close-browzed by deer and uncouth shaggy cattle.

But he never reached the light beyond. The shade into which he had entered never yielded to the sun, but darkened, and deepened into untimely night.

He saw the man who slew him; saw him step briskly out of the brake of thorn and hazel, saw what he held, and saw the purpose in his eyes. What next he saw was behind the curtain our eyes cannot yet pierce.

His beautiful body lay on the path, the likeness to the marble Antinöus of his face more marvellous than ever in its wide-eyed, wistful questioning, as though asking of mankind, "To what purpose is this waste?"

What his soul looked like, naked where it now was, in His eyes who alone saw it, who of us can tell?

CHAPTER LIII

Philip found his wife waiting for him in his own writing-room. She looked very pale, and terribly fatigued.

"Are you never going to sit down?" he asked, coming close to her, and laying a hand on each of her shoulders, as if to force her gently down into the chair beside her.

"I am tired enough to sit down for ever," she said, smiling and obeying.

They had not all at once very much to say to one another.

He breathed a long sigh of eloquent relief and thankfulness. To him it seemed as if everything had been taken away, and everything had been given back.

It was almost impossible to believe that a good deal less than twenty-four hours had passed over them since the beginning of their trouble — and now it was over.

Gill, never peculiarly talkative, seemed to fall into silence as into a rest. She was much more disposed to think than to speak. Her whole being was flooded by a great deep of thankfulness. Her first sense of relief was not so much in reference to the actual danger and ruin that had threatened, as in reference to all the weary arguing to and fro, and the inward and outward discussion of facts and their bearing, the inevitable, intolerable, involuntary and incessant weighing of results. As to the actual danger — the threat to her position as Philip's wife, as legal mother of his children — that seemed to have fallen at once into a vague distance and perspective. She had never consented to believe in the reality or gravity of the threat, and now she could

hardly believe that it had ever ranked as a genuine menace. What she was resting in was the sense of her husband's relief, and of there being no longer anything to ponder and weigh and discuss with weary iteration in her own mind.

Her feeling was of entire gratitude to God; she had not the least personal complacency, as if the breakdown of the wretched man's plot had been in any measure due to her own unflinching front, the force and strength of her own nerve and courage.

But Philip could not help thinking of that. No doubt the plot would have been exposed in due time by mere investigation; for as Gill had said, the plain fact of the elder Zante's death, since it was a fact, could be proved. But such proof might have taken not days but weeks, and what weeks of misery and misgiving they would have been. His wife's undaunted bearing had caused the whole lie to crumple up in a short half-hour.

"Gill," he said at last, "how soon did you know for certain that the man was an impostor — how soon did you feel sure that he was not his brother?"

"Almost at once. I saw him first reflected in the big mirror opposite the door of the saloon, and the likeness was staggering . . . but though *everything was like*, I felt almost immediately that nothing was the *same*. The voice, the face, the figure, the manner, the hands, were all amazingly like his brother's, but not one was really the same. In certain words and phrases, even in certain little tricks of speech, he reminded me of his brother to an extent that was simply startling, but all the time I felt that the likeness was not identity."

She paused a moment, and Philip told himself that had she lost her head, as ninety-nine out of a hundred women in her place would have done, he and she might have been lost too.

"His brother," she went on, "had a habit of stand-

ing or sitting with his left wrist clasped in his right hand. This man did the same. It was not for some time that he changed his attitude, and leant his right hand on the table; then his left wrist was hidden by his cuff. It was not till he went back, as he soon did, to the former position, that I had just time to notice something. To me it made very little difference: I was already so absolutely sure that the man before me was not Eustachio Zante. To some one else it might seem much more important and decisive than what I have already mentioned. It was this: just before he met us at Taormina Eustachio Zante had made acquaintance with some Japanese naval officers at Naples, and had gone once or twice on board their ship to lunch or dine. They had on board an expert in tattooing, which the Japanese do beautifully, and he had had a tiny snake tattooed upon his left wrist, its tail in its mouth, like a bracelet. I disliked it, and told him it was barbarous and Oriental, and he was very susceptible in such matters. He immediately took to wearing a wrist-watch in rather a broad leather strap that completely hid the tattooed bracelet. When Empedocle Zante raised his left arm to meet the right hand, as he resumed the attitude I have spoken of, I saw that he had no such mark upon the wrist."

"And you said not a word to him about it?"

"No. It seemed to me a dull physical proof. I liked better listening, while every moment added another moral proof that he was an impostor with a learnt story. But there it is."

To Phil this only seemed another illustration of her splendid courage and self-possession.

"I had no part to play," he said, "but that of listener and bystander. You seemed almost to defy my help, and there was nothing I could do to help." He laughed a low gentle laugh. "You almost frightened

me. I could scarcely look at him at all, but I did not wonder he was cowed."

"Was I such a virago?"

"In the true original sense of *virago* you were. He will certainly never attempt another interview with you."

"And yet you disapproved of my giving him money. You thought it rash and careless."

"Yes. He will never come back; but he may write and plead, and the fact that you gave him money may be distorted."

For a brief moment she was silent, and then in a plain voice said:

"God will still be there."

She was so little given to verbal pieties that her words had much more effect of quiet confidence.

He laid a friendly hand upon her shoulder again.

"Do not think I shall ever again question your wisdom," he told her. "Heaven forbid that I should say a word to shake your courage. You know I was proud of you, though I stood still, useless, a mere spectator."

"Were you proud of me? Were you not a little ashamed of me? I was — at all events I am now. The weapons I used were such as I could snatch at, without looking whence they came. I saw he was a coward, and mean; pride and hardness were all I could see to meet him with. I spoke just now of trust in God. I was not, while that man was here, thinking much of God, but of myself and you and the children. It was my own pluck and coolness I depended on. If they had failed I should only have got what I deserved."

"But God always gives us more than we deserve —"

They both looked up. A man was standing at the open window, a man whose coming there surprised them both.

But Gill stood up immediately and bade her husband

go and see the children, and then come down to luncheon. She herself went to the window.

"Do you want me, Mark?" she asked, smiling. Her heart was full of goodwill to every one, and she had always had an interest in him. She could not understand his coming there, but was sure there was no impertinence in it. The door closed behind her husband, and she made a sign to Herrick to come in.

"Do you want me?"

He drew out of his pocket a small parcel and laid it on a table near him.

"Something," he said in a dry voice, "that you gave to a man who has changed his mind by now, and does not want it any more."

She remembered having once given him a small thin book of rustic verses, mostly by Burns, at the time when he was ill. He was so strange a man that it occurred to her that he was now giving her back her present. What could she have done to offend him? She was conscious of seeing him seldom — of late scarcely ever. She could think of nothing else. It came as a jarring note; but to-day she could not be offended in turn.

"Are you cross? Do you think I have forgotten you?" she asked, with a smile of entire friendliness.

"Me cross! You gave me back my life — I would be proud to give mine for you."

He turned away at once after that, and went out by the open window.

The packet lay on the table, wrapped in coarse paper, and Gill did not lift it from its place. If it was the book she had once given him she would take it back some day; she knew him to be a man of wayward, flickering emotions and impulses. She fancied he might already have repented of whatever queer movement of pique or passion had made him return her gift. Of

course he should not treat her thus; but to her he seemed a wild creature, unaccountable, oddly mixed of gentleness and roughness, whom it would be pedantic and vulgar to try and judge by priggish conventions and standards.

The gong set up its low, thunderous boom throughout the house, and she turned away to go and meet her husband.

On such a day of happy restoration she could not be a stickler for her accidents of dignity, even if she would; and her nature was to hold them of trivial significance. After luncheon she went back to her husband's room to take away to her own the packet she had left; Philip was still in the hall.

She had not, even now, intended to open Mark's small parcel, but the moment she lifted it in her hands she knew it could not be what she had thought; it was too heavy. It certainly contained money, and did indeed contain all the notes and gold she had given to Zante.

"Phil," she said, going to the door into the hall, "come here; I want you. Let nurse take the babies."

"We're not babies. I'm nearly four and Zilly is almost free," protested her first-born.

But he was obedient and let his father go, informing his nurse that he had a biscuit for her, with a sugar roof, from the dining-room.

Gill drew her husband into the room, and told him exactly what Mark had said and done. Then she showed him all the money she had given Zante.

Almost while she was speaking the butler entered the room, and said he wished for permission to see Mr. Andros and tell him something of serious importance.

"Very well, what is it?" Philip asked. But the man hesitated, and Gill at once stepped out of the open window by which Herrick had gone away more than half-

an-hour earlier, taking the parcel he had left with her.

"Now, Milman, what is it?"

"It's dreadful, sir; I don't dare to tell it even before her ladyship."

"Well, her ladyship has gone."

Philip at once felt a misgiving that what was to be told would concern her, though the man himself had had no such idea. He had only been afraid of blurting out a tragic story in her presence because it must startle her — as he had, indeed, been startled himself.

"The gentleman," he began, "the gentleman who called here yesterday, and to-day again —"

"Well, what of him? Has he come back?" And Philip's heart sank, as he made the inquiry.

"No, sir, I wish he could come back. He has been murdered — shot, in the rook spinney, as he was going by the short cut across the park to the east lodge."

After an exclamation of horror and surprise Philip said:

"Send a groom for Dr. Porson at once. Have they brought the gentleman here?"

"No, sir. I knew a doctor ought to be called, but I had to tell you first, sir; and the poor gentleman is dead, sir; he gave Frederick half-a-crown when he let him out at the front door. Frederick was the last to see him alive."

"Who told you this? Who found him?"

"Edward Strong, the park-keeper, sir, who lives in the east lodge. He was coming up to the house and he found him. As the poor gentleman was quite dead he came straight on, knowing it was not right the body should be disturbed till the police had seen it. So he came to tell you, sir, without the least delay."

"I will go at once. Is Mr. Wyngate here? [Mr. Wyngate was the bailiff.] Then he had better come

with me; and you also, I think. But I wish to speak first to her ladyship. Tell Mr. Wyngate to wait for me here."

Philip went immediately to his wife, whom he found standing almost where she had stood during the interview with Zante.

"Gill," he said, coming up close to her, and laying a hand on her shoulder, "something terrible has happened."

She could see that by his face, and her own became very grave; but this time she had no fear for the children. If she had any other fear or suspicion she did not betray it. Long afterward Philip knew that a horrible misgiving as to a man she had liked and befriended had then stricken her coldly. She did not speak or move, but waited in a pale silence for her husband to tell her what had happened.

"That wretched man"— and she needed no telling as to who the man was —"has been murdered."

She might almost have said, "I knew you were going to say that!" but she did not utter a word. Neither did she tremble, but she thought he must hear her heart beating. It seemed to be almost up in her throat, choking her. And yet she had time to feel an enormous thankfulness that this ghastly thing had not happened yesterday — when it might have seemed a horrible advantage to her and hers.

She was sick with longing to ask, "By whom? Is there any suspicion?" But she would not.

She sighed, a long weary sigh, that came chokingly.

"Do you know any more? Tell me if you do."

"Very little. And I must go. They found him — Strong found him — lying dead, shot, in the rook spinney less than a mile from here. A doctor and the police have been sent for. But I must go myself. Wyngate

is here and is going with me — and Milman too. I shall have to identify him."

He, too, could not help feeling, in all his horror and pity, an immense thankfulness that to-day he could do this. What could he have said yesterday?

Yet he knew that Gill's trouble and his was not over, that much difficulty and trouble must remain in store. There would be plenty of need still for his wife's courage. On oath they might, almost certainly would, be called upon to detail the nature of their own interview that morning with the dead man.

He drew Gill to him, and held her one moment in his arms tenderly.

"This time *together*," he whispered and left her.

She did not stay now in the saloon that had seen her vigil of last night, but went to the chapel, and knelt down. Over her head, under a niche upon one of the pillars, was the image of the Mother of God and man, with her Son close-pressed against her breast.

"The Little Child that leads us," thought Gill, "if only we would let Him!"

In front, behind the white veils of the tabernacle, within the closer veil of the ineffable White Sacrament, was the Child Himself: the coldly-welcomed baby whom Bethlehem at first would not receive, whom Bethlehem — the House of Bread — houses for us till Time's trivial ignorance shall end, and the clear morning of Eternity shall be come: the Silent Child who was the Word of God's unbeginning, unending utterance: He who grew into a boy whom marvelling doctors heard, and grew into a Man of Sorrows, acquainted with grief.

"Pity him!" whispered Gill. "You have not forgotten how to make blind children see. Who taught him love? Finish the lesson — take what is yours. . . . Greater love no man can show than to lay

down his life for his friend. If it be twisted, untangle it. Pity him! If I can — if I can see, and understand, how much more you."

Was this Gill? With tears streaming down between her praying hands, with passionate mother-cries not of lip or throat but of a heart that had no room for anything personal, for any paltry dread of what this new misfortune might forbode for her own high reputation. Not one thought she gave to that: not even for Phil's dear sake, or the little children's.

It was all for Mark.

She had never known him so well, never felt so tenderly towards him, as now when he had done this blind, mad thing which undid nearly all that her own courage had gained.

She never once accused him in her thoughts of his stupid, senseless interference which must cost her so dear — had not one petty feeling of personal irritation or grudge that, meaning to help, he had so deeply injured.

Little as she had learned, she had learned that much — to judge not by result but by meaning.

Poor half-mad Mark!

"Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, saith the Lord!"

How easily by that high word she might have smugly condemned his blundering wickedness — but she did not. Not her business that, but the great Judge's.

Knowing the deed bad, she took the twisted, misguided but noble will for the deed, in spite of the inevitable mischief to herself.

"Pity!" she whispered. "By this wild way lead him higher than he meant. The martyrs could die for you — not much that. He meant to die for one of us. You know better than I. I cannot teach you the Path of Mercy in which all your life was travelled."

Her prayer did not come glibly, was not poured out

in a swift flood of easy speech, but welled up in her, like a spring that has to force its way to the surface against all the weight above. What was best in it was its total freedom from any taint of self, whence it derived a peculiar quality of sweetness.

She had never yet found God so sensibly near. His universal presence she had felt from time to time, though by no means always, for, as has been said before, her nature was not mystical; but His special presence here she now realised in a new manner, which was not so much faith as experience.

Afterwards it seemed to her, on looking back to this afternoon, as if but for that she must have been nearly heart-broken. The moment her husband had told her of the murder she thought of Mark: and she had an instant conviction that he would do nothing to save himself — even if anything were possible.

Outside the summer day was pitilessly glad. She knew how the hot sun was pouring down on park and meadow, how the hum of innumerable flies was hanging in every copse and spinney. Even here she could hear the wood-doves crooning — though here there was an intense silence not broken by any sound of hers. For, though her tears were falling, she was not sobbing. At first she had felt a hot smart in her eyes, and then the tears had come.

She hardly ever cried: in all her trouble last night no weeping had relieved her.

Last night, for a long time, it had been all resentment and rebellion. To-day, though in truth Mark had injured her, she had not one transient feeling of resentment against him.

Neither did she weary herself with trying to guess how it had come about. She built up no theory. Simply she felt sure that Mark had killed the man to get him out of her way.

Presently her prayer itself ceased, so far as any word, even unspoken, went. Why should she tell God what to do? How could He let a soul so noble be wasted? For she had no doubt at all that the soul was noble. She felt sure that even she could see that much.

The crime itself she did not in the least ignore — that it was done for her did not blind her. Nor did it seem less because its victim had been her enemy: she had no thought of him as of an enemy. Yesterday he was her one enemy in all the world, but that was passed away so fully that she could scarcely be said to remember it. She thought of him simply as of a wretched unprepared man pushed out of life unawares. As she thought of his horrible fate her tears were half for him — nay, perhaps not half, but partly. His unworthiness of life did not make his need of life less, but more. Not by nature peculiarly soft, she was without ruthlessness and she was singularly just. But generosity is very often regardless of justice, and she could understand all Mark's crooked generosity of purpose in spite of the plain irremediable injustice of his sin.

That it was a sin she recognised unwaveringly. But its heinousness only made his need cry the more loudly to her. If we are to pour ourselves out for God's pardon of the sins that custom makes us used to, are we to stand aloof because some sin shakes our tough conscience by its monstrous bulk and blackness?

There are sins against God that men smile at, and sins against men from which they turn aside as if the sinner were outside the pale of mercy. So that the wrath of man does not work the justice of God.

But Gill, faulty as she was, had a larger spirit, and was not to be silenced by the awful greatness of the need for pleading. She had none of the meanness that shrinks from compromising itself by seeming to identify itself with the indefensible.

She was at no pains to protest to heaven her absence of complicity. The crime had been committed for her — she would not bid God witness that it did not profit her, and that she had no hand in it.

There are people who must explain everything to God, and plead out their innocence before Him as if He were the dullest jury. Gill was none of them.

She never once breathed out the lowest whisper to eternal justice that *she* was innocent, or stood herself aloof from the crime by protest of her abhorrence of it.

God knew its heinousness better than she.

More than that, so far as she prayed at all, in any common sense of prayer, what she was concerned with was not the matter of present punishment, but the deeper matter of real waste and loss. That Mark's life here should pay for that of the wretch he had murdered was heart-breaking, seeing that it was for her he had flung his youth and life away. But it might be — nay, was — world's justice, a temporal necessity. Worse lay behind: Mark's death might be his gate of life — it was for the opening of that gate she agonised. Not final ruin, not utter waste. O God, not that!

CHAPTER LIV

Gill was right. Mark had made no effort whatever to save himself. His gun, well known as his, lay on the ground near the murdered man, and when sought for he was found, not at his home, but near it, wandering by the river.

"Yes," he said at once; "I killed him. I had a grudge against him."

He would say nothing else. His silence thenceforth was obdurate, though he had much less of the passionate sullenness that he often showed. He would answer no questions, and the warning that anything he said would be used against him was quite superfluous.

His mother quite lost her head, and said much that would go against him. They had taken him home first, and he listened carelessly to what she said.

"Mark he's not been himself — ever since yesterday," she wailed. "His father was queer, it's well known, and Mark takes after his father. There was never nothing of the kind in *our* family, but the Herricks was all queer. My folk were again' the marriage, though Herrick was a better eddicated man nor my father. He could talk like print — same as Mark when he likes. 'What signifies long words when there's no sense in their tails?' my father'd say. 'It ain't the long-tailed sheep as has most meat on 'em.' But Mark's father could talk so fine as even the parson was put to it understanding him. And Mark took after him. He was as full of nonsense as a gentleman — from a child: and as rumpcheous at times as a cow that's had her first calf took to market — he was yesterday, and all this

morning; as restless and fidgetous as a wasp in a winder. Any one'd say as he had the fever on him, and no wonder, staying out half the night i' the rain; him as near died o' his chest six year ago, when the duchess, as was, came first i' the neighbourhood."

All this was gasped out with extraordinary rapidity, but in short volleys, punctuated by sobs and tears that were half hopeless, half indignant. It was easy to see the poor woman was far too angry with her son to think of his trouble and danger except as a disgrace from which she was, as yet, only anxious to exonerate herself.

"So I'm punished for marrying Herrick when my folk were again' it," she wailed. "They said how it'd be; and I might be Mrs. Bowler now, and drive in my gig to market. And young Job Bowler might be *my* son instead of Liza Pilder as was, that never had half my looks, a savin', gumptious lad, as has no more brains nor what serves him in his station . . . but Mark was allus too cliver, like Silas Herrick his father. And this is what comes o't. There was niver no cliverness and disgrace in *my* father's family . . . and if he's worthy to see this day it'll break his heart in heaven. And so's mine broke. It's a shame as women can't pick their own children. I'd a' picked a quiet lad . . . it's queerness as brings misery and disgrace in families."

She grew more and more rapid, more and more incoherent, so that really one could hardly tell whether she knew or not when Mark was taken away.

Meanwhile at Andros the story was being told to Gill. Philip was full of horrified regret. It seemed simply too bad to be true that such a crime should have been committed by Mark, that such a terrible fate must be laid up for him, one of his own people. He had never had any special liking for the young man, or shared in his wife's personal interest in him; but for

her sake he had taken an interest, and had been thoroughly willing to befriend Herrick as far as that wayward person would submit to being befriended. The whole affair was a mystery to Mr. Andros, and he could not help feeling how hard it was that by this mad folly of wickedness he and his should be involved. But he did not think of it selfishly, or forget for a moment that what might mean great trouble and difficulty for Gill and himself must mean death for Mark.

"He must be mad," Phil said for the twentieth time.

"Indeed it is to be hoped that he will be declared mad. They are all saying now how 'queer' Herrick always was — and his father before him. Wyngate believes that Mark's aunt — the father's sister — is in the county asylum now."

"He is certainly utterly strange and wayward . . . but Phil, I cannot bear to think of what must happen to him, and I can think of nothing else. I cannot sit still and simply discuss his sanity."

She could not sit still at all, but got up and walked to and fro, always coming up close to her husband, after walking half the length of the room away from him.

"Will he be brought here — before you as magistrate?"

"Wentworth is also a magistrate, and I suggested to the inspector that if he succeeded in arresting Herrick he should take him before the vicar. I have to be a witness — at all events as to identification."

"Of course they will succeed in arresting him. If he had meant to try and get away he would not have come here with the notes and money."

Philip almost groaned as he thought of it. But still he was too high-minded to yield to mere resentment, though in truth it was hard not to feel resentment at the

blundering interference — he pulled himself up, with a blush: what was all that compared with murder?

Mark was in fact brought before Mr. Wentworth, and Strong gave evidence as to the finding of the body; Mr. Andros, Wyngate, and Milman as to their going to the place. It was the butler who had actually found the gun, Strong who identified it as Mark's. The squire simply identified the deceased; and then the police inspector deposed that he had arrested Mark Herrick, who had of his own accord avowed the crime, with the statement that he had had a grudge against the man he had murdered.

The proceedings were as brief and formal as possible, and Mark was remanded in custody, no bail being asked for or given.

Mr. Wentworth had always liked Mark better than Mr. Andros had done, but the squire was quite as deeply moved as the clergyman, and as full of grief for the young man's terrible predicament.

"His only chance," Wentworth said when they were alone, "is that they will bring him in mad."

"His demeanour here was not sane. He was quiet enough, but did you notice that he seemed to carry himself with a sort of elation?"

"Yes, and yet I felt that he did not buoy himself up with the least hope of escape. I am glad the assizes are just over; it is always better for the accused when a good while has elapsed since the crime."

"But he has avowed it. Otherwise the evidence might be regarded — or made by his counsel to appear — purely circumstantial."

For personal reasons also Philip was glad that the assizes were so distant. There must, of course, be an inquest; and those proceedings would be more in detail; but how far it would be necessary that they should involve his wife he could not fully tell.

As it turned out, Mark was unable to appear at the inquest. Long before he reached Rentchester Gaol he was obviously very ill, and on arrival he was carried straight to the prison infirmary. On the way he had begun to shiver, and his previous pallor had given place to a hot, feverish flush, that grew more and more apparent. The prison doctor was called at once, and ordered the accused man to bed, finding his temperature already over 102°.

"The man has pneumonia," the doctor told himself; and by the morning he made the same announcement to the governor of the gaol.

"I know Herrick well," he explained. "Six years ago, when I was parish doctor, I attended him — and he ought to have died then. Why he got well I never could make out . . . he never was accountable. But he did get well — or seemed to. Anyway, instead of dying he threw off his illness — lungs then too — and went back to work, and has been at work ever since."

"If I were him I shouldn't get well this time."

"He doesn't intend to. But unfortunately it's my duty to get him well if I can. At present, however, he is simply dangerously ill, and that is all I have to certify."

Mark had his own duty to do, and to get well seemed to him no part of it. He had meant to give his life for a certain purpose, and that he did not "go back of"; but he was not too mad to perceive that his trial could do no good to any one; but on the contrary his death now might avoid much trouble.

On the night before the murder he had stood for hours in a chill rain, and had been drenched to the skin. His wet clothes he had never taken off, and they were damp still when he was arrested.

He had not deliberately chosen to fall ill, for he had

not given the least thought to it; but now that he was ill he was glad. The thought of months in prison was intolerable, and since he must die he would rather die at once. Besides, he felt that his death by illness would rob the dead scoundrel he had killed of the vengeance that his execution for the crime would be.

On the evening of the day following his arrest his temperature was higher, nor did it ever fall. Next morning it had reached 105°, and was another degree higher at night. On the morrow it was still over 106°, and at sunset he died.

CHAPTER LV

About an hour after Mark's arrest, Gill had gone to see his mother, whom she found seated on her son's bed, where long ago, in the days of his illness, he had lain looking out of the open door. There were only two rooms in the cottage, and Mark's bed had always stood in the living-room.

Mrs. Herrick was not alone: for several neighbours had come in to sympathise. This they found easier from the fact that the poor woman's one pre-occupation was to separate herself from all the Herricks, and their wild, uncanny ways.

"If I was to die this night," she was protesting, with loud lamentations, "I'd say the same — as *I'd* niver no hand in Mark's bringin' up. Not from the start, I hadn't. I remimber now, the turn it giv' me when his father laughed at me for wantin' to take him to church to be christened. '*I'll* christen him for you, and save you the trouble,' he said, 'and Rover and Mouser (the dog and cat, Mrs. Fairdrop) shall be godfather and godmother.' And he did it too. And he splashed the water o'er the cat, and stepped back on Rover, and there was such a mewing and yelping, as ye'd say it was Bedlam or worse. . . . O my lady! O my lady! this ain't no house for your likes to come to — though I mappreciates your ladyship's kindness: and you as cured my poor lad when the doctor couldn't, and all for this! To think as a son o' mine should disgrace the kindness o' a lady that gave him his life in a present — as he said himself, scores o' times. O my lady, it ain't fit you should come to a house where a 'rest has been

committed, it ain't indeed. . . . Well, if you're going, Mrs. Fairdrop, and Mrs. Beadles, and Mrs. Wittle, and you too Mrs. Mowdler, I'm sure I thank you for your goodness, and it's true what you say, *I'd* no hand in it, and it's hard as the disgrace should fall on my father's daughter, as there weren't niver no disrespectable doings in his house, not even in liquor, for he took it as quiet and reasonable as if it was milk of a Saturday night or market night, or that, and no one the wiser. But Mark's father, as niver touched a drop, would act as mad as if he'd a bucket in him."

Abashed at the greatness of her visitor, Mrs. Fairdrop and her friends curtseyed themselves out, and Gill was left alone with Mark's mother.

That which had unlocked their loquacious sympathy silenced Gill. It had been a most agreeable relief to them to find that they might speak freely of the son, so long as they piled condolence on the mother. It jarred terribly on Gill to hear her disclaim Mark, and exhaust herself in protestations of her own blamelessness.

Alone with the great lady, Mrs. Herrick became much less noisy, and her vehemence dwindled down into querulousness: but the burden was always the same.

"O my lady! If you'd be so kind as to say you know it's none o' my fault! It's that 'urts me! Them as don't know'll be bound to think as it's a judgment on me for summat as *I've* done. . . ."

"No one can be so cruel and unjust," said Gill gently, sitting down by the poor woman, and taking one of her hot, tear-wetted hands in hers. "Don't think of that."

She softly rubbed the widow's fat hand in her own, and in a fashion the poor creature felt comforted. All she craved for was "some one to take her part."

"Eh! it was good of you to come at once," she moaned. "It's what I didn't dare to think of. That

your ladyship should come here — where a 'rest has been committed."

Of the murder that had been committed, she seemed to have no thought at all. How could Gill wish that she should think of it?

"Of course I came. What's the good of friends if they don't com straight to us when we are in trouble?"

Mrs. Herrick listened with a sort of puzzled wonder. It had never occurred to her, in her most prosperous moments, to think of titled persons as "friends." And it seemed to her the reasonable thing that all impregnably respectable people should hold aloof from a house where such a deep disgrace had fallen. But though puzzled, she felt elated. She was almost inclined to the consoling belief that if her father "was worthy to know" that here sat his daughter, hand in hand with a ladyship, it might prevent his heart from breaking in heaven.

Her tears fell more softly, and her expression grew less protesting, more simply mournful.

"Dear Mrs. Herrick," whispered Gill, drawing the fat form of the widow nearer to herself, "even in this terrible trouble, you have One Friend who is not forgetting you."

"The squire! God bless him! I might ha' known as he'd be kind — he wouldn't be your ladyship's husband else; making so bold as call him so: for he *is* your husband, just as Silas Herrick was mine, in our different line o' life. If the squire takes my part who'll dare to wag a tongue? Does he know as you're come, my lady?"

"Indeed he does. He'll come himself if you'll let him. But Mr. Andros is very shy, and was afraid to intrude on your great trouble."

This was quite beyond Mrs. Herrick. The squire shy! And how could "his likes" intrude? Even in

her misery she had time to think the "quality" had funny notions. Just like Mark; he was full of queer notions too — it was that that had ruined him. Long, long ago, when Silas had come wooing her, his queer fancies had half scandalised, half fascinated her: later on, when they were man and wife, they had only worried and annoyed her.

"Eh, my lady. If I'd had the sense to say 'No,' and mean it, when Silas Herrick courted me! All this mischief would ha' been saved. But I were young then, and silly, and his fine talk *seemed* fine. To hear him, you'd think as folks was all alike, rich and poor, and all as mattered was whether a lad and a lass 'loved each other': that was all his talk. Niver of the house, nor the stuff to put in it, but 'love': and I listened. O my lady, don't you think hard of me for that, for I was a young lass then, and did not know the folly. It'd be different now."

"Dear Mrs. Herrick! If you loved him and he loved you, you were right to forget the furniture and only think of him."

"God bless you! You're the first as ever said it. How my mother went on, as there wasn't even a feather bed, and no chaney, except the short set as I bought myself, and Silas laughed at because it were never to be used. My lady!"

"Yes, dear."

"I wouldn't say it except to you. But it's in my heart to say, as Silas, wild as he was, crazy at times, weren't a bad man . . . not a bad husband, in his mad-like way. When Mark came, and I was frightened, and thought as I'd die, he sat up, all two nights, and held me pretty nigh as your ladyship does it — if you'll not be vexed wi' me for saying it. He did. He could be more like a woman nor a man. He could. And for all he'd laugh at me, he niver cussed at me, nor yet

leathered me — niver. I'd rether be leathered nor cussed by any man — wouldn't you. O my lady, what am I talkin'! But I'm fair crazy wi' the trouble, and old times runnin' back on me."

"Let them come, dear Mrs. Herrick. We're only two women in a great sorrow that God has let fall on us. Talk to me, and tell me of those times when you and Silas were young together."

In truth it was a relief to herself to hear the poor creature dwell rather on the past than on the present. What could the utmost sympathy say of the present? No tenderness could lessen its tragedy. And in speaking of her husband the widow lost much of the heartless egoism she had shown in every allusion to her son.

It was piteous to note how what had once been a sort of self-willed pride in Silas Herrick's difference from the common run of young men she had known, had been changed into a kind of shame. Gill's heart was large enough for pity of the wife, but there was room, too, for pity of the husband. She could not, though she was trying, half-consciously all the time, make out clearly what sort of man he had been. Had he been really mad, or only "queer," as his wife called it, and unaccountable? Was he considered mad by his neighbours? It seemed terrible that she found herself hoping it had been so, as holding out more hope for Mark, seeing that that must offer the only conceivable escape for him from the penalty due to his crime.

Though she seemed to give her undivided sympathy and attention to the widow, her thoughts were more than half with the son, perhaps all the more because his mother showed so little memory of him but what was selfish and antagonistic. Her own interest in Mark had always been oddly maternal, though in reality he was older by a year or two than herself. And now her tenderness was like a mother's — that cannot cease with

the sin of the child, but deepens with the need. She was thinking, too, of her own children, and the thought of them softened her even more. How if her own boy should ever stand in want of a mother's love and pity and she not be there to give it?

"Had you and Silas any other children?" she asked at last, wondering if it would be right to go away without any further effort to bring the poor woman to a gentler attitude of mind towards Mark.

"Yes, my lady, one gel. But she died a babby in my arms. Thank God! Else, who knows what *she*'d ha' come to?"

Gill could say nothing, and Mrs. Herrick went on.

"Not as I thanked God then. I took it hard. So did Silas: though he was more took up with the lad. She was a little, fat, white thing — takin' after my father's family: the boy was always dark and swart like me and *his* father: only he grew up lean and long, like Silas. He was too like his poor father altogether — that was the mischief. Silas encouraged him: the more the lad talked queer the better my husband liked it . . . and this has come o't. I s'pose he'd think as there had been enough o' queerness, if he knew now."

This conclusion she arrived at with a sort of despairing triumph, breaking out again into noisy lamentation. Gill felt how little she had effected. Nevertheless, she tried again.

"Mr. Andros," she said gently, "is going over to Rentchester, to-morrow, on purpose to see Mark, if he may. He will need everybody's help: yours, and mine too."

"Eh! What can *I* do? The squire can do pretty nigh what he likes; but what can the likes o' me do? Who'd hearken to *me?*"

"I didn't mean in that way. Two poor women like us can do nothing that way. But you and I can help."

Mrs. Herrick listened, but in a mere puzzle.

"Dear Mrs. Herrick, God will listen to us if no one else will. He is waiting to hear."

It was terribly difficult to Gill to "talk piety," even to her own nearest and dearest. But for the poor woman's own sake she could not absolve herself from the duty of trying, very gently, to turn her thoughts away from herself and up to something higher. What other hope of comfort could there be for her? She herself could not stay here for ever, and, as things stood, she knew that when she went away the widow's mind would just run back into its original groove of desolate expostulation and selfishness.

"What can *I* say?" Mrs. Herrick complained querulously. "*I* didn't make the Ten Commandments? Nor yet it isn't me as has broken 'em."

Poor Gill! What could she say? She had certainly not come there to argue or preach.

For a little while she attempted to say nothing. Then at last she did say —

"How can we expect God to forgive if we won't begin? The sin, as you say yourself, is against *Him* — why should *we* be hard?"

It seemed quite astounding to Mrs. Herrick to hear herself accused of hardness; she was a fat, soft creature who had always had her softness "thrown up at her." All the same, she had thoroughly felt Gill's tenderness and friendship, and she could not afford to part with it: who else was there for her to lean on?

"Listen, dear," Gill went on, again stroking the fat wet hand with hers. "I know what is in your mind — that your son has brought shame and disgrace on you. Forgive it! That is your share. The rest is nothing to do with you."

"The 'rest! How can I feel as it has nothing to do wi' me? When it was here — and the neighbours saw

it, and all the three parishes know it by now: and to-morrow it'll be in the paper. It's the 'rest as has all on earth to do wi' me."

She whimpered in feeble protest; but Gill persevered.

"Don't you *want* God to forgive him?" she asked, in a voice that shook her hearer — quick enough to detect disapproval.

"Eh, my lady! Don't be hard on me. Don't 'ee now! You're all as I've got to lean on."

"No! It would be wicked of me to let you go on feeling like that. I'm your friend, but not of much use, though I would do anything to be of use. I spoke of another; not a woman. A Man — but a Man who is God too, and who can do everything. He was accused — falsely, but died for the false accusation. And He will have pity even on one who may have to die for an accusation that is not false. Because He knows everything. Don't you *want* Him to have pity?"

"Eh, my lady! What's it to do wi' me? Will He be said by me? It don't depend on my wants."

"No, it doesn't: thank God. It would be a poor hope for us if *we* were to be judges. I know that. But *this* depends on you — how you will be able to think of yourself for all the rest of your life. If God forgives the much, and you won't forgive the little, you'll have that to trouble you in all the long years to come."

No doubt Gill will seem hard, to less confused judges than Mrs. Herrick: but in truth she had a healer's work to do, and the healer must often seem hard. Over and over again, now in one form, now in another, she urged and pleaded, finding it, of course, less difficult once the thing had been said once. She knew well that with such as Mrs. Herrick iteration counts for more than one clear final statement.

How far she did at length succeed, may be left to the reader's judgment of probabilities. Till she succeeded

in some measure she would not go; that she had achieved any complete success she could not tell herself when at last she went.

Perhaps the widow, when all had been said, had arrived at no conclusion much higher than that if a great lady like her could in any measure "take Mark's part," or "speak up for him," his mother might venture on some inward, vacillating, nervous, altogether muddle-headed feeling that she too ought not to range herself against him.

From one misapprehension she was saved, not by the light that was in her but by the darkness. Gill might well have had some misgiving lest she should have seemed to condone or minimise the most horrible crime; but she had none. For she had been aware throughout that Mrs. Herrick's thoughts had never really reached the crime at all, but had hovered in the merely squalid foreground of its disgrace.

CHAPTER LVI

Mr. Andros did visit Herrick, so did Mr. Wentworth, and so also did Father Pope.

The dying man was civil and respectful to all of them; but he was glad when the squire was gone, and had said scarcely anything to him. To Wentworth he said almost less: for the clergyman felt it a duty imperative to try and bring the young man he had known well, and liked too, to a sense of his great sin; and Mark was unwilling to listen.

Mr. Wentworth's words were few and manly, plain and direct, but Mark brushed them aside.

"He's not like he used to be," he told himself with a perverse pride and aloofness. "When I was dying before he came often and often to try and say what he ought to say about death, and that. But he couldn't; because he felt too much. Now he's changed, and it's easy to him to sit there, and be solemn; he's married now, and his fine wife, and his children choke his heart up. It's easy to see he thinks it bad luck to have had anything to do with a murderer. I've brought disgrace on his parish, and he's afraid folks'll think it was partly his fault that a parishioner should be so bad."

Mark was never very just.

"I know all you can say, Mr. Wentworth," he said. "I did it deliberately. I had hours and hours to think it over. All you say is true, very likely: but it's not a bit more true now than when I made up my mind. And I can't talk much . . . I haven't the breath — nor the sense. My mind is drowsy too. You'd

like to pray for me? I've nothing against it. Only you can do it as well at home as here. God's not shut up in prison like me. You'll find Him when you get home; if you're still in the same mind."

"Yes, Mark," the clergyman answered, rising at once. "I shall still be in the same mind."

He had flushed, as a man is apt to do who finds himself rebuffed. And Mark chose to think him merely offended. That was the last time they saw each other in the world.

"He is as hard as the nether millstone," Mr. Wentworth told himself as he went home. "I'm sure he is not sane."

But Mark's sanity, he was already aware, was not likely to matter as much as he and Mr. Andros had thought yesterday. For they had both of them talked with the prison doctor, whom they knew well, and he had allowed them to see that he did not believe there was any probability of recovery.

"It's my duty to get him well, as it would be in any case," he had said. "But it is the first time I have ever felt cruel in doing all I could for a patient."

They could, however, perceive that he did not think his utmost efforts would avail to save Mark for a more terrible fate.

"He is much less comatose than in pneumonia is common," he added.

"He complained of drowsiness to me," said the clergyman.

"Very likely," said the doctor rather coolly. "Of course he varies. But he is generally more awake and sensible than men in his state are apt to be."

Andros and the clergyman went back together, talking almost all the time of the unhappy man they had visited. On getting home Philip at once told his wife of Mark's condition.

"The inquest will probably not be held now for a few days, ostensibly on the chance of his being better. But I can see that the doctor thinks there is no hope of that."

"How can one hope it?"

"No, of course. Gill, if Herrick dies before the inquest, it will be almost purely formal. I shall not feel called upon to detail the nature of our interview with Zante. I shall offer evidence of identification only, with the least possible explanation of my knowledge of the man. I do not fancy many questions will be put. On the evidence and Herrick's confession a formal verdict of wilful murder will be found by the coroner. As there will be no trial that will almost certainly suffice."

She knew well how entirely her husband was thinking of her in all this. And she gently touched his arm to show she understood and was grateful. But she could not help a sense of meanness in gaining so much by poor Mark's death.

Presently she said she would go again and see his mother.

"I cannot think that the idea of his death will be anything but a relief; it is natural, and yet unnatural too."

It was late in the afternoon, and she went at once. She found Mrs. Herrick alone, for this time the neighbours had seen the squire's wife coming and slipped off before Gill reached the cottage. The widow was more quiet, with a sort of tearful importance. As no one had hinted any blame of herself, and she had been receiving visitors all day, she was more disposed to assume the mien of a heroine. Gill's second visit rather tended to increase her sense of being important. The poor woman talked more glibly than yesterday, with fewer sobs of interruption; more quickly she could not

have talked. Her colour was higher than usual, for several neighbours had impressed upon her the duty she owed to society and to herself of "keeping herself up." Good-natured Mrs. Fairdrop had a bottle of brandy, "in case o' sickness," and felt the present occasion to be one of justifying emergency; egg-flip had been administered until Mrs. Mowdler had been constrained to remind the sufferer that "eggs was bilious," and the egg was accordingly dispensed with.

Gill found the atmosphere of the cottage flavoured with this grim conviviality, for the day was hot, and the company had been from first to last numerous. Nor had Mrs. Fairdrop thought it etiquette to pour forth her libations for the widow only, "who might ha' felt ockard else." Indeed Mrs. Beadles, fired with emulation, had slipped home for a thimbleful of gin, that she also reserved for purely medicinal purposes, "being unekilled for spasms as Beadles from a child was libel to, and if not neighbourly now," she argued, "whenever?"

But if, inside, the cottage had little to remind her of Mark, the glimpse of reedy marsh outside, framed in the doorway, brought back almost with a stab to poor Gill the memory of her first visit here. An arm of shallow water reached almost to the threshold, and a brood of rather elderly ducklings were disporting themselves in the water, entirely without parental supervision, and mostly upside down.

Perhaps Gill needed all her memories of the ruined young life, so quickly slipped away to a greater assize than any here, to keep her soft, for no doubt there was a temptation to mere disgust and repulsion when she found herself interrupting a levee of gossip and ghoulish conviviality.

"I told you, dear Mrs. Herrick," she began, "that Mr. Andros was going to Rentchester to-day. He has

just come back. He saw Mark, but only for a few minutes. The doctor would only allow him to stay a very short time."

The widow ceased her moaning — quite easily. For it was now a formed habit.

"The doctor, my lady?"

"Yes. Mark is very ill. The doctor — Mr. Redpath, who used to attend him here — you know how he always liked him — is attending him. You saw yourself how wet Mark got, the night before last: and he caught a chill, and now he is very ill."

"And *I*'m ill. Spasms — if your ladyship'll excuse the word. Subjick to them I've allus been, tho' saying nothing. For them as suffer in secret the Lord'll reward 'em openly."

A gasp or sob, so sudden as to resemble a hiccough, interrupted the mourner.

"Mrs. Herrick," Gill said in a very low voice, "I had better tell the truth at once: it is very unlikely that Mark will get well."

"And he's all I've got!" the widow cried with loud lament and suddenly uplifted hands. "All I've got to look to! except the young ravens. . . . I'll be upo' the parish."

Mrs. Herrick was more disposed to-day to such tags of piety as wandered into her memory; perhaps it was the egg-flip. And all day long she had been beset by a misgiving of not having hitherto quite risen to the occasion.

"Please, please, do not let that trouble you. That is the only way in which money can help. Oh dear! if only money could do more."

"The root o' all evil: and a very present help in time o' trouble. 'Eavenly words both. O my lady, if all was like you!"

The gratitude was at all events genuine: and Gill

bade herself not wonder if the helpless creature were pre-occupied by the dread of want. To those who have always been poor its menace comes no less grimly than to those who have fallen from riches. Since the terrible foreboding that her son would be hanged had not, so far as Gill could see, ever disengaged itself in the widow's mind from the general overwhelming sense of mere disgrace, to stand out in all its separate horror, what need was there that she should think of it now, when mercifully it was beginning to appear altogether unlikely?

"Be quite sure," Gill repeated with slow emphasis, "that neither Mr. Andros or I will ever allow you to feel your terrible loss in that way. In that one way I can be of use. Do not think I shall ever forget, or be careless. It is a promise."

"God bless you, my lady! And if Mark should die"— she fell to a slow whimpering —"I've nothing black — not so much as would dress a dolly. And it's all I could do then to show as I'd forgiv' him: as you yourself was so set upon."

It was an odd fashion of announcing forgiveness, but this also Gill could see was sincere and genuine, and she promised with a plain definiteness eminently satisfactory to Mrs. Herrick's feelings that her wishes as to mourning should be rendered in the fullest degree effectual.

The widow was much more softened now than Gill at once suspected. Presently she gave a signal proof of it.

"My lady," she said, sinking her voice in trembling earnestness, "I've summat on my mind, and to you I owe it to speak out — even if it goes again me wi' you. It's little I slep' last night wi' thinkin' of it. Times and times I tried to put it away; but it come back. It did. And now I'll out wi' it. I will." She rose from

her seat, and tottered to the door — this was not due to egg-flip, but to her deep sense that such a gait was what was expected of her. It would have been much easier to her to step briskly, but, within her own limits, she was a woman determined to do right. She closed the door and came back. "It's hard to confess," she sighed, "when no one knows, or need ever know."

Gill urged her, with almost guilty tremors, to say nothing she would rather keep to herself. What *could* she be about to avow? Gill could have no more secrets from her husband. "Please do not tell me anything that you would not like Mr. Andros to know —" she was beginning.

"*Like* him to know! The squire! Oh dear, oh dear!" And the poor woman's sighs were enough to expand her always ample bulk. "But let justice be done. My lady! For all I talked so loud of having no hand in Mark's wildness and badness, and all that's come o' it, I had, I had."

Gill was utterly astounded. She felt herself trembling, and a cold dread of hearing something terrible chilled about her heart. "Are you *sure* you ought to tell me?" she urged.

"Yes. That's why I've brought myself to it. O my lady, don't take it too hard. But I'll out wi' it. I *had* a hand in my poor son's queerness. I had. I always laid it all on his father; makin' out as the lad's queerness was teetolly fro' him, and was his fault. But it weren't. Foriver I've talked o' my family, and made out as they were all like my poor father; and even Mark never knew — I never let him — *as mother were of a gipsy stock* — that's where the poor lad's wildness and craziness come from. I knew it, I always knew it, but I kep' it to myself. It's the gipsy blood I brought him as has led to all this misery and trouble. If Silas had married where *his* father had wanted him

to — a grocer's daughter in Rent'ampton, as squinted and taught Sunday-school i' the Baptist chapel, and two hundred pounds of her own — his son would ha' been Jabez Trekyll, as keeps the best draper's shop i' Rent'ampton, for Kezia Trekyll (Kezia Primly as was) was ready enough to take my poor husband, the best-looking young fellow then you iver see, and if she had Jabez Trekyll would ha' been Silas's son, i'stead of Mark, as was wild and rumpcheous from his short-clothes, and all along o' the gipsy blood I brought him. Now, it's over, and O my lady, it's hard to come down after all these years. But you're too good to throw it up to me, now I've told when I needn't. You'll please remember that; as no one knows, not the babe unborn, unless it's Matthew, Mark, and Luke and John, bless the bed as I lay on —"

And the long pent-up weight of secrecy poured forth from Mrs. Herrick's eyes in tears as sincere as any she had shed since her great trouble had fallen on her. Nevertheless she was relieved.

"It's a judgment," she wailed. "I knew 'twas a judgment the minute the 'rest was committed. I've laid it up for myself. And now as I've told it out, p'raps Them as rules the wind'll keep their temper wi' the shorn lamb."

CHAPTER LVII

It has been mentioned that Father Pope, as well as the squire and Mr. Wentworth, saw Mark in the prison infirmary, but it was not on the same day.

After Mass at Andros, on the day following their visit, he saw the squire, who said:

"Herrick was very rough and obdurate with Mr. Wentworth. I always thought they were rather good friends."

Father Pope perceived that the squire was surprised at the treatment the clergyman had received, and that it did not make him think the better of Herrick.

"Perhaps," he said, anxious to bear gently on the poor, fallen young man, "he could not forget that you and Mr. Wentworth were magistrates, and had an official connection with his case. It is precisely because such cases *may* occur, though, thank God, they do actually occur rarely, that I think it a bad thing for any clergyman to be a magistrate."

"Very likely you are right. I had nothing to complain of myself; he was quite civil and respectful, only on his dignity, so to speak, and determined not to talk."

"Do you think I should be allowed to see him? Mr. Redpath and I are old cronies; but I suppose it rests with the governor of the gaol."

"I will give you a note to him, if you like. I feel sure he will have no objection."

"Of course they will think I want to convert him. Well, so I would if I thought there were any earthly chance of it. But Mark is a born pagan, like hundreds

of them who have never done any awful thing like this."

Father Pope did go, and was allowed to see the dying prisoner. The governor made no difficulty provided the doctor were willing; and the doctor made none so long as Herrick himself were not unwilling. He saw Mark, and came back saying:

"He would *like* to see you."

There was no one else in the small infirmary, and Mr. Redpath left Herrick and his visitor alone together.

"It's good of you to come," Mark said at once. "I had no right to expect it. I'm not one of *your* bad children."

Father Pope sat down close to him, and for a moment or two was silent; then a queer, indulgent smile came over his kind face.

"He's not solemn like the parson," thought Mark. "He remembers I can be solemn enough on my own account. . . . What's making you laugh, Father?"

"Laugh! I wasn't laughing. But, though you say you're not my child, you call me Father."

"Well, every one does. I don't know what else to call you. 'Sir' sounds stiff, as if you were just a gentleman. I'd not be much credit to you if I was your child."

"We're none of us much credit to the Father we all have; but it doesn't stop our being His children — and He won't let it. I'll tell you what was in my mind when you accused me of laughing. You said you weren't one of *my* bad children, and I was thinking what a 'rumpcheous' child you used to be. Once when I was riding you tried to make my horse shy and run away; I was remembering it."

"I remember it too. You were riding a new horse

they had at the Court, Blue Peter, and the grooms said he ought to be called Blue Devil."

"So you tried to make him throw me!"

"Yes. It wasn't out of ill-will, only for the fun of seeing you tumble off."

"Well, you were disappointed. Blue or not, he was 'Peter,' and knew I should stick to him."

"Next time you met me I thought you'd thrash me. And *you* thought I'd run away. I could run quicker than you."

"Perhaps if you had tried to run away I *should* have thrashed you. I could run quicker than you thought — I was almost young then. I expect it's a pity I let you off. You never got any thrashing — and you wanted it. That's the mischief."

"I sh'dn't have minded if you had. Father gave it me, a time or two, and I never minded."

"It must be fifteen years ago — nay, twenty perhaps. And it seems like yesterday. I think that was the beginning of our acquaintance."

"Not the end, tho'. You were preaching one Sunday evening in summer, and the little window near the pulpit was open, and I was outside and jumped up and popped my head close to it, and squealed out 'Fire' and ran away."

"So that was *you*. I thought it was some one with no manners."

There was a brief silence, and then Mark:

"What are you remembering *now?* Not that, I'm sure. You're not laughing this time."

"No, my lad, I'm not. Nor remembering."

"It's a pity," said Mark quietly, "there's no good word like 'remembering,' for the future."

"You're guessing. And I was thinking of *now*, not so much of the future."

"Tell me, Father, what it was."

"If you wish it. I was just thinking how hard it must seem to a young fellow like you that I, who have lived more than fifty years in the world, should be going on living in it, well and strong, and you lie here so ill."

"Dying, you mean. You know very well, Father, it is a good thing for me to die like this — instead of what would have to be if I were to get well."

"My lad, I don't know so much as you take for granted. Only one thing I know, that it looks like a mercy that things are as you say. It will save some that love you a fearful grief and shame."

"Don't you make any account of *my* shame?"

"The shame of a great sin is not its punishment but itself."

The priest paused a brief moment, and laid a gentle hand upon the sheet, close to Mark's hand — the hand that "all great Neptune's ocean" could not wash blood-clean; but there is another tide, half-water and half-blood, that passed out of the dead side of a sinless criminal whom men-judges had found guilty of death for blasphemy and sedition.

"Do you think, Mark, that if you had lived to be hanged that I should think *that* your disgrace?"

"So you think I *am* disgraced. I can cheat the hangman but not that."

"It doesn't matter one jot what I think."

"It does to me. I haven't so many friends — never did have — that what one real friend thinks of me doesn't matter."

The priest, who as he himself had said, seemed, with his white hair, an old man to Herrick, laid his hand on that so redly stained.

"As you say, we are so friendless here in this tangled life, and so lonely, that it *does* matter what our one Friend thinks."

Mark did not draw away his hand, but he spoke with a quick impatience.

"Never mind Him. You know I didn't mean Him. We are strangers. I was asking for *your* opinion."

"I can dare to have no opinion but His."

"Well then?"

"And I dare not say what His is. If I knew all He knows I would tell you."

"You know what I did."

"No, my lad. Only He knows what you did. I can only know yet what it seemed."

"And it seemed?"

"A sheer brutality and cruelty."

Mark winced, but held his peace, not meekly.

"For an armed man, who knows what he has planned, to kill a man unarmed, who has had no misgiving, suspected nothing, can look like nothing but cruelty and brutality. Your real Friend knows, not what it looks, but what it was. As for me, I know this only, that you were never cruel nor brutal before."

"Is a judge cruel and brutal that condemns a man to death?"

"He may be."

For a moment Mark was foiled. All along he had figured himself as having been a just though inexorable judge.

"But a judge," the priest went on, "is, at his worst, not self-appointed."

"The law appoints him. He acts for the law."

It was somehow congenial to the priest that Mark should say this rather than that the appointment comes from State or King, as representing the Sovereign People. But he said:

"And lawlessness made you judge."

"So you say: so they would say who, if I lived,

would send me to the gallows. But all law is not written in Acts of Parliament. For real law is only justice."

"You meant to make justice?"

"To prevent injustice."

"You said you did it out of 'grudge.'"

"To prevent another injustice: that only occurred to me after that man was dead."

"Can you not pity him even yet? Whatever was your 'grudge,' cannot even his death wipe it out?"

"Why should it? Nor did I think it would. I killed him to prevent an injustice and a cruelty. My grudge was that he was cruel and unjust. He is not changed — only dead."

"How can you tell, Mark? Dying men have often forgiven their murderers. Will you, now he is murdered, forgive him?"

Herrick perceived clearly that this seemed to Father Pope the great thing to struggle for. Had he urged Mark to think of his own forgiveness it would have moved him not at all.

"I had only one grudge against him," he said hurriedly and much less guardedly. "I cannot see that his death alters it. Only *he* could alter it. If *he* is changed, *I* would be changed."

"And he must be changed. Mark, I will be as plain with you as a man can be. I will tell you what I guess — what I have not breathed to any one. On the night that Mr. Andros had to go to Rentchester for the meeting I was called up to a sick-call. It was at Abbots Haughton, and my best way lay across the park. I was there a long while, and it was much after midnight as I came back, and pouring rain. When I got near the house I saw one of the big windows in the saloon lighted up, and a man's figure outside stood out against the light. It was you, and you were looking

in. I determined to go and see what you were about, but when I got near you had slipped away. I went close to the window, though, and saw Lady Glentilt inside, all by herself, and evidently full of trouble. I longed to tap at the window, and go in and see if I could be of any use, but it seemed a sheer impertinence; and though I stood there till she went away, looking less unhappy, I did not dare to mix myself up in her private matters, and so at last went home. But you know how little things are talked of in a quiet place like ours, and next morning I heard that a strange gentleman had been about, and had seen Mr. Andros at the Court; then that this same man had come again, and that it was him you killed. Now I dare no more pry into your private matters than into her ladyship's. I can understand none of it, but I am as sure as death that you had no private quarrel with the man you in your madness sent untimely to his judgment; as sure as life, which is far more true than death, that no private cause of quarrel would have deceived you into thinking yourself just in doing what was, say what you like, cruel and brutal. How you came to be standing out there in the rain that night, and watching that dear and good lady, I cannot say, but it may have been as much by accident as my own being there —"

"No. For I had been about the house ever since dark — it was not accident. Then I saw the shutter opened, and was able to see her all alone, and it was not hard for me to guess that she was in sore trouble. So I went near, no more daring to let her know I was there than you; but she should have a friend, who would gladly die for her, near, even if he could do nothing for her, and she could not guess he was so near."

"A friend who would gladly die for her"— the phrase was not lost on the priest's attentive ear.

"You *knew* that she must be in trouble — I only *saw* that she was."

But Mark held his peace and would explain nothing. Nevertheless, his friend felt now quite certain of what he had all along suspected, that it was to do some supposed service to Gill that he had killed the stranger. In some way he could not guess Mark must have known more of the man he had slain than appeared.

"Mark," he said quietly, "she could never stand in need of any crime of yours."

("Could she not?" thought Mark! but he still kept silence.)

"You would not dare to let her know of your presence that night, when you stood outside her window in the rain — you knew it would be an insolence to meddle in her trouble — and yet you meddled worse."

Certainly Father Pope did not mince words, but it was not resentment of his plain speaking that made Mark feel that he was blushing.

"If you were even now to live," the priest went on, "and be brought to trial, as you would have to be: all those who saw the stranger whom you killed, would be examined minutely on oath as to every word that passed between them and him. To all that you would have laid them open."

"You know very well, I shall not live."

For a few moments the priest mused. He was not thinking of Gill and her husband, though Mark thought he was.

CHAPTER LVIII

"MARK," he said at last, "will you now forgive that man?"

Herrick moved impatiently. What could it matter to a dead man whether he were forgiven or no? But Father Pope was thinking of Mark himself, and to him it mattered altogether.

"He was not *your* enemy," the priest went on; "if *she* came here and begged you to forgive him, would you still be so hard?"

"Not for anything on earth would I have her come here — this is no place for her to come to."

"I am sure you are right. But I will go now and come back to-night if I can; if not, to-morrow — as her messenger."

And without a word of further discussion or farewell, the priest arose and went.

All the long way home he was praying; scarcely with the prayer of the outspoken petition, but with the unsyllabled prayer of recollection and affection. Of the outraged majesty of human law, he thought but little, though he thought nobly of all real law, as Malvolio of the soul: but of the outraged Majesty of Divine Patience and Mercy. He was not, any more than Gill, setting dictations to a Love much tenderer than his own, only recalling it to himself, with humblest confidence ranging himself on its side.

Neither had he the pious busybody's morbid sense of personal importance in the matter. He did what he could, as his small reflected light led him, and would

lose no time, but he did not fuss or bustle. He who believeth shall not make haste.

It was late afternoon before he got home, and Gill was not in. She had, in fact, gone again to see Mrs. Herrick: but the squire was out, and no one could tell him where she was. He went into the chapel, ready to await her return, patiently, and said Matins and Lauds of the morrow.

"Priusquam te formarem in utero novi te," said the first antiphon. "Before I formed thee in the womb, I knew thee." ("Shall a woman forget the child of her womb so as not to have pity on him — yea, and though she should forget yet will I not forget thee," thought the priest.)

Then the second antiphon, "Ad omnia quæ mittam te, dicit Domimus, ibis: ne timeas, et quæ mandavero tibi, loqueris ad eos." "Thou shalt go to all to whom I will send thee; and fear not, what things I shall send thee thou shalt say to them."

He thought of the little he had said. Perhaps that was all that had been sent.

Presently the second lesson began, "And I said, Ah, ah, ah, Lord God: I know not how to speak, for I am a child. And said the Lord to me, Say not, I am a child. For to all that I shall send thee shalt thou go; and all things whatsoever I shall send thee shalt thou speak."

And the third lesson opened with the same command, "Rise thou then, and gird thy loins, and say to them all things which I shall teach thee."

In the hymn of Lauds came the ending of confident supplication:

"Te Deus simplex, pariterque Trine,
Supplices et nos veniam precamur:
Parce redemptis. Amen."

He ended the office, and knelt in the darkening church, trusting all the cause to the Great Advocate: lip-silent, but with his tender Irish heart of a priest full of undoubting trust and pity. God's Passion, Man's Compassion — the Divine division of labour since God came down to toil in His own vineyard.

Presently there was a sound as the door opened, and Gill herself came to him.

"I am afraid you have had long to wait," she said. "I have been with Mark's mother."

"And I with him. I shall go back to him; but I want a message from you."

He told her what it was. He wasted no time asking her to forgive Mark; he knew there was no need.

"Till he forgives the man he killed he is not ready to be forgiven himself. God is ready, but he is not."

Gill thought of how insistent she had been with Mark's mother to forgive him. Had *she* no one to forgive — and had she forgiven?

"Mark is wild and obstinate still," the priest told her, "but there is one human being whose word can do much. God suffers it. Will you send him the message I want; that you yourself forgive the man he killed? If *you* can he must."

"I would go myself and tell him," she answered, "but I will not even wish anything Philip would shrink from."

"I know you would go; and I know you are right to give up any thought of going. But will you let me go instead?"

"Forgive that poor creature? — it seems so long ago now since I had anything to pardon in him; of course I forgive. But, Father, there is some one else."

She paused a moment, and then, with as few words as could be, told him the story with which the reader is already so familiar.

"Him, whom I did once vow to love, I have never yet forgiven," she said simply. "His memory I have hated and scorned; asking God to love me. I have thought poor Mrs. Herrick hard and mean for holding back from forgiving Mark the disgrace he brought on her. My own disgrace I have nursed. Even Mrs. Herrick has gone before me the road I was so glib to show her."

On the step before the altar she knelt down; with no further speech her beautiful proud head bent. It was dusk there; up above, the last red light of the sun that was set poured in by the clerestory windows.

"For whom are you praying?" the priest asked her gently, bending near to her. "For Mark — or for yourself?"

"For Eustachio."

"I have my message," the priest said within his heart, and left her there. "So it is," he told himself, "our children draw us up."

Late as it was, he made his way back to Rentchester — arriving when it was too late. The prison was shut up for the night; and he patiently drove home the thirty miles to Andros, for there was no train near, that his people might have Mass in the morning.

But by noon on the morrow he was again with Mark.

"Listen," he said. "I will tell you something. The man you killed was not the man you thought."

The poor dying murderer gave a low cry, and the priest's heart smote him. But he went on:

"I know now whom you meant to kill. He died years ago; years before the lady he had wickedly deceived married her first real husband. The man you killed was his brother, who came on a vulgar errand of trying to get money — and he got it; but out of charity for his starving state. No one was afraid of him."

"And I did no good!" Mark cried bitterly.

"How could you think of doing good that way?"

Mark thought of all the harm he might have done by his rude and brutal interference, and with absolute simplicity thanked God that he was dying.

"And she forgives him," the priest continued. "Not only the poor begging wretch whom she never knew till the day before you killed him; but the man whom she took long to forgive, whom it was hard, hard, hard to forgive."

"She never told me till she told me that I might tell you," Father Pope continued. "Can you not see what *she* had to forgive? And it is all forgiven. I come today not for myself but for her — her messenger. . . . Her forgiveness ends that horrible memory; in the light of forgiveness its black shadow is henceforth swallowed up. A wrong pardoned has no further sting against us. Am I to go back and tell her that *you* will not let the dead trouble and sorrow *be* dead? Whenever she thinks of you (and she will never cease to think) that will keep her old wound from being quite healed. It is a deep mystery and wonder — the power we have over each other's happiness: you, who have no right to any such power over her peace, nevertheless have it. You have done her one enormous harm; will you die persisting in it?"

The shadows of death were thickening fast about poor Mark, but a light was breaking too.

"I forgive him," he said, "as truly as she forgives me."

"Then he is truly forgiven." For several minutes neither spoke, but the priest knelt close to Mark, holding his hand in his own.

"You have done everything you could do for her," he said presently. "Will you do nothing for yourself?"

"There is no time to think of myself."

"Any time is long enough — it is not thinking but doing. One friend's claims you have settled; there is another Friend waiting. He has waited all your life: reward His patience. Indifference is hard payment for a life's love. Mark, my lad, you were never over just — too hasty for it — but you were generous. Can you be mean now?"

"The meanest thing of all would be to try and grasp the labourer's reward when the idle day was done."

"Never talk of payment or wage. You are right in saying time left is too short for such haggling argument. There is no meanness in giving the only thing asked for."

"What can I give?"

"You know. Everything. Yourself."

"A scurvy present."

"A strange present for a King to need, but He knows His own want best, and He wants it. Lad, lad, your *heart* was never amiss: can you harden it? May I guess what is in your mind? That you hold back because you would not seem to shrink from punishment?"

"Yes. I have mixed my drink; let me drink it."

"Listen. He knows well, better far than I can, what is keeping you back — the fear of seeming to cry off being punished. You *will* be punished."

It was a strange argument to use, and few might have dared to use it. But the old priest knew with whom he was dealing.

"I am not asking you to beg for remission of punishment but simply for friendship. To make that much amend — since that is what is wanted. Leave the punishment to Him and His justice — not hangman's justice, or jury's justice, but His. Be ready for what He lays upon you, but do not let it divide Him and you."

"*That* would not. But I know nothing about Him."

The priest drew a little dingy book from his breast and read the story of the Passion.

"You know that much," he said when he had finished.

One of Mark's rare and odd smiles crept upon his face.

"I am not even a Christian," he said. "I was never even baptized, except by my father as a joke, with the dog and cat for godfather and godmother. Poor mother! how it worried her! — her folk were all decent church-people . . . it bothered her more than anything."

"I will baptize you now if you would like; you will not then be able to make that excuse, that you are not even a Christian."

"But I'm grown up."

"I don't know that. You are only a child, as wilful as ever."

"Very well."

And Father Pope arose and fetched water and did baptize him. It was soon done.

"Mother'd be glad," Mark said with a little smile. "Do you think *she* would?"

"Yes. I will tell her. But Mark, do you still pretend you know nothing about Him?"

"Anyway, He knows no good of me."

"That is not true. *I* know some good of you; and He knows more — all there is."

"It isn't much — not all the lot."

"The good and evil — it is all His secret, and yours."

"Father, the evil wasn't much — not what He'd count much, by what I make of Him —"

And Mark told his tale of shortcoming. Perhaps, even the world would not have thought it much till the last fierce crime that had brought him where he was. Father Pope was not surprised; always he had been

drawn to the wayward and strange young man by a sort of intuition of his purity. Almost as clean of any foul thought or word or deed as he entered life was the dying murderer sinking out of it.

In a very few brief words the priest told him what his office and delegation was, and exercised it.

"It's easy," Mark said presently, "to talk of friendship. But it takes time."

"It takes Eternity for this one. There is no hurry. You and I alike have the same unending opportunity. The little we learn here, even when we begin as children, can only be the letters. And the light here is too cross and confused to read even them clearly; in a very little while you will know more than I."

He paused, but spoke soon again, for he knew that speech was becoming more laboured and difficult with Mark.

"By the time I preach next you will know it all."

Mark seemed uneasy.

"You said I should be punished."

"Yes. Nor do I go back of it. *Where* you will be then I know not; nor where, when I die, you will be. One thing I know, whereas you were blind, then you will see. Long the punishment may be, sharp too, but full of friendship, and so sweet. You said yourself you never minded when your father punished you."

Mark understood, or he would not have been Mark.

And so by gentle, swift shafts of light the earnest, utterly believing priest taught him the tender truth of purgatory.

"Father's punishment is all preparation," he said; "it looks forward more than backward. Much less to the evil chastened than to the good it obstructs. The good waits — that it may be real and perfect, not a contradiction. God does not give unfit gifts as we do; so even the final gift of heaven is not given till we are

ready, till we can accept it without the burden of unfitness."

At last the doctor came.

"I see," he said quietly, "your visit, long as it has been, has done him no harm."

He took his patient's temperature.

"Rising still," he almost whispered.

"Yes, rising," said the priest.

LAST WORD OF THIS PREFACE

That night Father Pope stayed with Mark, who slept, or lay half unconscious, not talking, therefore, often to him, but speaking much of him to the Friend who shared his watch.

He was not proud of what he had said, knowing it to be hurried, partial, imperfect, incomplete: but he left it, without wondering much how he could have spoken better. He had said what he was able to say, and what, as it seemed to him, Mark could bear and find use for.

Now and then the dying man aroused himself for a few moments, and would try to speak, but found it nearly impossible, and obeyed when the priest gently bade him not weary himself with unavailing effort. During these brief intervals of waking consciousness he would read a few sentences aloud, or say a word or two of the most beautiful of the children of men. That Mark was cheered and comforted by his presence he saw well; but so far as he could do it naturally, without constraint, he never let him forget that there was some one else, another watcher, and One who need not presently turn back, but would go with him all the way.

At daybreak Mark opened his eyes once more.

"Is the night over?" he asked.

"Yes."

"How long it has been!"

"It is gone now."

He knew that Mark would have no more darkness of this earth.

Again the young man slept. And the priest fell

back into prayer. An hour afterwards, Mark woke again, his weakness much more apparent, but his mind clearer.

"Thank you," he said, scarce audibly, "for waiting to see me off —"

"Almost my first journey," he added presently.

"Why should you go alone? I have waited to speak of this; there was so much to tell you. But there is a Fellow-traveller, if you'll have Him, who knows the road."

In very plain, brief sentences, he told of the white disguise God wears among us, littling Himself to us, that the soul may not lack that which the body needs, food: that no one may be alone, in life, or in the narrow pass between life partial and life complete.

"Will you take Him for Fellow-traveller?"

"If He will come with me."

So Mark made his first communion.

He spoke no more to any one, not even to the priest; and half-an-hour later he set off upon his journey. What he and his Companion had to say, each to the other, is not for our rough conjecture.

"Gill," said Philip, coming to her in the garden, where he found her with their children, "Father Pope is here." As soon as he got back from Rentchester he went off at once to another sick call. "He is in the library: you had better go to him."

He spoke very gently, and she knew well that Mark was dead. Her eyes looked her question, and he answered them.

"Yes. Poor Herrick is safe now. They let Father Pope stay with him to the end. But go and let him tell you. I will stay here with the children."

She rose at once, and moved away across the smooth lawn. As she went, the big clock above the stables

struck twelve, and immediately the mid-day Ave Maria began to ring from the chapel tower.

"Mezzogiorno," she thought, almost smiling to find herself slipping back into the old southern phrase, "e poi po' merrigio. Mid-day struck, and now the afternoon."

THE END

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